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FEMALE LIFE IN PRISON.

BY

A PRISON MATRON.

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Second Edition, Revised.

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FEMALE LIFE IN PRISON.

CHAPTER I.

EXTRA DUTIES OF MATRONS.

THE extra duties of a prison matron are not the most arduous appertaining to her peculiar profession; on the contrary, very many of them are pleasant changes from the usual every-day monotony, and as such are welcomed and striven for.

Of those that are not agreeable changes, it may be as well to speak in the first place. Mention has been made so often of "the darks," that the mere allusion to it as an extra duty will be sufficient in

this instance. But in addition to seeing a refractory prisoner to the dark cells, there is an unpleasant patrolling necessary when an outbreak has happened in the night; for it is essential to use every endeavour to keep the rest of the women from following the evil example.

Under these circumstances, after a prisoner has been removed to a refractory cell, one or two matrons are often awakened, and it becomes their duty to patrol the deserted wards, until the startled prisoners subside in their beds, and mutter themselves to sleep!

"That's how that Smith always does it," may be the prisoner's remark—"as if she couldn't wait a proper time, and not wake everybody up like this!"

The disadvantages of a small staff of matrons become painfully apparent when an officer falls sick—sometimes two at once. Cheerfully and willingly as extra duty is performed by those in better health, the extra labour, in this instance, tells upon the staff, saps at its strength, and confines the matrons to the prison for many days together.

Some-one's "night out" must be given up two or three times at least, and some-one's Sunday holiday passed over, when the sick matron is in her room incapacitated from public service. The work goes on steadily—the smaller staff work with a will, and lock and unlock their greater numbers with the same precision. And as in ordinary times one matron of a wing at Brixton, for example, locks and unlocks women *six hundred times a-day*—that is to say, that every prisoner is locked and unlocked twelve times, and there are fifty prisoners to a ward—occasionally even fifty-one—it may be imagined that any extra prison duties are not required in addition to this extensive lock-and-key practice. When, as it sometimes happens in the summer time, six or seven matrons are sick or absent on leave, the excitement and hard work of the remaining officers are pitiable to witness. Double duty, and little chance of enjoying fresh air, constitute an existence which no white slave need envy.

Surely the bright days will come for these quiet, faithful prison servants to be rewarded

with a little less daily toil and a little more necessary recreation.

"How you ladies manage to live, in such a constant state of excitement, is a puzzle to us on the men's side," a Millbank warder said to me one day; "our hours are as long, but the male convicts are quiet and rational, and obey orders. It must be a hard time for all of you."

And the warder is not the only one in prison service who entertains the same opinion.

But the wrongs of the class from which the force of events has separated me have been detailed, and need not any undue repetition If, from the seed I have ventured to sow, the tree will bring forth good fruit in its time, I shall have fulfilled one purpose for which this book was written. And in the hope that I have said enough, and that in common charity some little good will result from my outspeaking, I pass from that part of my subject.

An officer on escort is an extra duty more pleasant, and, as there are several varieties of escort, I will briefly touch upon them.

The briefest variety is the transfer of Millbank women to Brixton, or Brixton good-conduct women to Fulham Refuge. A matron is put on escort duty, and sits near the door of the omnibus which is to take the prisoners from Millbank to Brixton; she is responsible for their good behaviour during the transit, and is expected to watch them closely and restrain any excitability. Outside on the step a male guard stations himself, in case of any attempt to overpower the matron and escape—in very exceptional cases an extra guard is placed on the box by the side of the driver. The omnibus full, or half full, as the case may be, the prison gates are opened, and the equipage rattles away over Vauxhall Bridge, where no toll is paid, and down the South Lambeth Road, across the Clapham Road, by the "Swan" at Stockwell, towards the lower part of Brixton Road.

The women are always well-behaved; the excitement of the change, the consciousness that it is one step forward, one step nearer liberty and the old gangs—or the old friends, I will not be too severe—keep them in good spirits. The behaviour

of these women is worth remarking—their excitability, their whispered observations on everything that passes, or is passed by them, in the world they catch a flying glimpse of once again.

"Everything looks so large, miss," was the remark of one prisoner to the matron; "it isn't like the streets and houses somehow. It's something new and BIG!"

And this impression seems conveyed to the minds of most women. What a large dog!—what a large horse!—what large gardens to all the fore courts! It almost appears as if ten or twelve months' confinement to a narrow cell had diminished their powers of comparison, and narrowed their busy, plotting minds.

Spasmodic observations on the passers-by are not unfrequent, despite all efforts to keep silence. "That's like my brother Jack"—"that's like my mother!"

At the corner of the Vauxhall Bridge Road, before the railway arch is passed under, and the Vauxhall Station passed, there is an evident anxiety to see the shops amongst the London-bred

girls—it's so like the old times to see the shops!

Women will slily turn round in their seats, or lean over their fellow-prisoners, to look at the play-bills before the doors of the tobacconists.

"I wonder what's out now at the Vic, or the Surrey—oh! what treats I have had there!" a woman once sighed in confidence to her neighbour; "weren't they jolly nights up in the gallery at Christmas time?"

"Ah! it was all along o' the play I ever came here!" I heard a woman mutter in response.

It's always along o' something! The play, the concert-room, the streets, the false friend who tried to lead her wrong, and she so innocent!—the bad advisers, the cruel mother, father, husband, anybody—never her own weakness, or headlong desperate plunge to ruin!

In the suburban roads there is a touching anxiety to see the flowers in the gardens, or the rustling trees springing up therefrom. Flowers and trees are novelties with Millbank women, and there

is a yearning gaze directed to each front garden. Occasionally a child, all life and light, dances along the road, and escapes not criticism, being compared to little girls that they have known, or the little girls that they were once themselves.

Sometimes a reminiscence of the past leaps to the surface, perhaps in this fashion:

"Do you see that house there, Jane?"

"With the brass knocker?"

"With the black un, you fool!—next door!"

"Ah, yes! Well?"

"I was a servant there once. I ran away from there—they didn't treat me well enough!"

"Didn't they though?"

Perhaps the assertion is received altogether as an impromptu fiction, originated by the speaker for the sake of effect, in which case a very plain "What a lie!" rewards the giver of the intelligence. The matron commands silence, and the male officer on the step threatens to report the talker, and take her back with him.

"What a short ride!" is the exclamation, as the omnibus turns into the prison lane, and the

view of the outer world begins to narrow every instant.

From Fulham to Brixton is almost a repetition-sketch; the journey to Fulham is but of greater length, and the scenery more diversified. There is Clapham Common to wish to be wandering over; there is Battersea Park to gaze at, and the river to cross by Battersea Bridge; and the steamers, and the barges coming lazily down with the tide, and the row boats flashing on the water, to comment upon.

"Isn't this first-rate!" exclaims the exultant prisoner; "and they're all at chapel now at Brixton!"

Conveyance from Brixton to Fulham is effected by hired flies in lieu of omnibus; the numbers are less who seek the "Refuge," its doors being only open to the best of women.

Another feature of escort duty is worthy a remark or two although the practice is at an end, or, at least, very rarely occurs. It was customary, in times past, for a child of two years old, born in prison, to be passed on to those friends willing to receive it; or, if there

were no friends willing—which was very often the case—to that parish to which it had a legal claim. In most cases the child now remains with its mother until the latter's term of imprisonment is ended—which the more merciful rule, it is extremely difficult to say.

In the past, then, it became an extra duty much coveted amongst prison matrons, to escort a child to its grandfather, or grandmother, or uncle, who in all probability would be resident in the country. Far away journeys have been taken with these prison children under the old rule—a day and a night's absence, sometimes two, being allowed for the departure and return, and all expenses paid. And the child's amazement at its new position in society, the child's belief in the prison matron's power to protect it, keep it from harm, and work any amount of wonders, was singular, and at times affecting.

More singular and affecting still, the meetings of the friends with this little transplanted prison flower. If respectable people, as occasionally might be the case, there was the curiosity to see what the "girl's bairn" was like, struggling with

the effort to restrain a passionate outburst in the matron's presence. I have heard many anecdotes from matrons, that, well told, have affected the whole staff to tears.

One in particular, where a prison boy turned from the grandfather and grandmother he had never seen, went rushing back to the matron's skirts, hid himself in the folds thereof, and cried to be taken back to "mammy." Anything in his young life for the old prison and the prison toys, and the faces that were not so strange to him!

Then there was the sad duty of leaving a child down some court or alley in Liverpool or Manchester, to the charge of a wrinkled harridan, or a coarse-featured, repulsive-looking young woman, with crime stamped upon every feature—and the returning with the sorrowful prescience of how the story of that child's life must infallibly end.

Despite the alterations which have curtailed the duties of escort, there is still the chance now and then of a day's special service in the country. Women who are sick or ill are not sent home unattended; to the last there is consider-

able kindness shown to the prisoners. With a sick prisoner a matron is sent as escort, and the parting with the woman is made at her own door, with her own friends round her.

I remember hearing of one painful escort home of a woman who had made undue efforts to muster strength for her departure, and would hear of no persuasions to remain a day or two longer in the infirmary. The liberty order was made out, and go she must! There was no law in England to stop her—hadn't she been a prisoner long enough?

She was persuaded to allow of an escort to her friends in the country—I believe it was a journey into Wales—and all the long railroad journey the woman sat and struggled for life, and grew worse and worse at every stage, until the matron feared she would die upon the road.

"Oh! I've made up my mind to reach home, miss," she answered with a ghastly smile, to the solicitations of the matron to rest awhile and undertake the remainder of the distance the next day, and no persuasion could shake the liberty woman's resolutions.

The station was reached, a fly procured, and the home arrived at — and the woman died the same night in the arms of the friends she had striven so hard to see gathered round her once again.

Escort from Millbank or Brixton to the railway station is a more common duty, and not sought for in the least. To rise an hour or an hour and a half before the usual early time for rising, and set forth in the raw morning, often the dense dark morning in the winter time, in a hired fly to the railway station, is not an enviable task; more particularly as the matron is expected to return by breakfast time, and is put on full prison duty for the remainder of the day.

Still, it is a task performed with animation and interest; there is something satisfactory in seeing a prisoner at her best; in witnessing her suppressed state of happiness at the end of the long years of imprisonment—after all the praying, all the despair, all the breakings out!

The woman, as a rule, is strangely shy and

embarrassed at the railway station; the matron cautions her to remain stationary whilst she purchases the ticket for her journey, and she never wanders from her post to look about her at the bustling world. To use an old word, she is "dazed"—the contrast is too vivid just at present; she is waking from an ugly dream and cannot understand it yet.

Meanwhile the policeman at the station has recognized the prisoner's "out dress," perhaps the prisoner's face, which is familiar to him, as one he may have seen looking from a felon's dock; he keeps his watch upon her without being over-obtrusive, observes which carriage she enters, and communicates his information to the guard, in case of anything going wrong during the journey.

Then the prisoner wishes the matron good-bye, and the train rushes away with her homewards, she sitting very quietly in a corner of a third-class carriage, looking demurely down at the bundle in her lap.

There is a little sentiment occasionally in these partings: if the matron on escort be a

favourite, the woman will shower all the blessings of life upon her, and go away weeping bitterly at the parting; at times there is only a gruff "good day to you," and a glimpse of a morose, dissatisfied countenance as the train moves away.

Only one instance of ingratitude and of wanton wickedness have I known in these departures—and that was the prisoner picking the pocket of the matron who had had the charge of her for several years, had been always kind to her, and for whom the woman had feigned, in her way, some affection. The matron was doubtful if the act were really committed by the woman, or expressed, for the woman's sake, her doubts, and no efforts were made to arrest the woman on a new charge at her journey's end. Fortunately, there was not a large amount in the purse—and the woman, with her ill-gotten gains, was allowed to proceed on her way.

Proceeding to Fisherton is another extra duty—the last of any importance that I need dilate upon. This is a railroad trip to Salisbury,

from which city Fisherton Lunatic Asylum is but an easy distance; and thither two matrons, or two matrons and a male officer, convey those unhappy prisoners whose sentence has not expired, but whose minds have given way beneath the monotony of their position, or the dark thoughts natural to severe confinement, or for other reasons beyond human power to define.

Concerning these mad prisoners I shall devote some space in a future article, and need not detain the reader here to speak of them. Suffice it to say, in this place, that this escort employment is not the most agreeable, although the journey to Salisbury *is* a change, and valued as a set-off against the dark side of the expedition.

In the case of a refractory mad prisoner, Government is put to considerable expense for special carriages; but these poor benighted fellow-creatures of ours are, as a rule, very meek and tractable on escort journeys—children of a larger growth, to be amused by a word.

At Fisherton, after the prisoners are delivered,

there remains an hour or two, perhaps, to spend in Salisbury, and a pleasant glimpse of green fields and hedge-rows to be thought of in the future, when the long hours have come back again.

CHAPTER II.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—ALICE GREY.

I NEED have no delicate scruples in commenting without reserve on the character and antecedents of this woman. It was always her desire to be famous; her struggles in prison to assume a position to which she considered herself entitled by her past notoriety, were unremitting; her desire to call attention to the fact that she was Alice Grey—the celebrated Alice Grey whom the papers spoke so much about—was

evident from the first day she became a prisoner at Millbank.

Crime follows crime so constantly in this world, that I need make no apology for offering a few details of her earlier career. In the records of police news such lives as hers are soon forgotten by the casual reader. To strive to be notorious, by a series of crimes, is a vain effort—worthy of the narrow minds that scheme for it.

Still I have no doubt Alice Grey is not quite forgotten, although the details of her earlier career, which found their way into most of the newspapers of 1856, have been consigned to general forgetfulness. As Alice Grey made some sensation in her day, and as the new development of her character in prison is worth a hasty sketch, some little recapitulation of her early career may not be out of place.

The earliest trace of her capacity for swindling and perjury occurred in 1849, in the capital of our sister isle—Alice Grey, under the assumed name of Armstrong, charging a man with the robbery of her purse. This

malicious charge having fallen to the ground, Alice took to felony, and after suffering twice for that offence in Ireland, came to England, with a hope of better chances for her nefarious schemes.

Grey possessed considerable ingenuity in her tactics, and the great art—if there is any art in swindling after all—of assuming, with more than a common degree of truthfulness, those numerous characters which she personified. In Yorkshire and Derbyshire she was a clergyman's daughter, waiting at the numerous hotels for her father's arrival; then she was a Protestant escaping from Roman Catholic coercion; and at Canterbury she was a Roman Catholic lady, flying from a stern Calvinistic or Baptist father, who desired to immolate her at the shrine of paternal indignation, for acting according to the dictates of her conscience. Under these last afflicting circumstances, she obtained from the Roman Catholic gentry several handsome contributions towards alleviating her pecuniary distress.

This last scheme becoming unprofitable, owing

to the non-appearance of the indignant father, and the difficulty of some well-meaning persons discovering her address, Alice Grey travelled through Scotland and England, assuming in most large cities or towns the character of a victim. Her trunks and purses were constantly being stolen from her during her journeys, and she stranded on a desolate place without a penny in her possession! To throw a truthful appearance over these statements, Grey never scrupled to charge some-one with the robbery of her property, and to deliberately swear to the identity of the falsely-accused person. Contributions from the benevolent flowed in to assist her in her difficulties; and so, under a series of false names, Grey worked her way from town to town, leaving behind her an innocent being to suffer for the crime, to the perpetration of which she had solemnly sworn.

In England alone twenty-nine innocent persons were charged by her with robbery, nine of whom were convicted on her testimony.

It may be remembered that she deliberately

procured the conviction of two boys at Chester, who were afterwards released by order of the Home Secretary; finally Alice found herself domiciled in Stafford Gaol, to wait her trial at the assizes.

At the Stafford Assizes, Grey succeeded in slipping, for a time, through the hands of the law; to the public amazement, the grand jury did not return a true bill against the prisoner; and after some skirmishing between her counsel and the counsel for the prosecution, she was once more liberated, to the delight of the people of Stafford, who saw in her only a victim to persecution.

At Birmingham, however, she was immediately arrested on a charge of perjury, and from Birmingham forwarded to Wolverhampton, to meet a second charge of as grave a nature there. Finally, the grasp of the law she had almost evaded became more firm, and Alice Grey, in the Spring Assizes of 1856, was sentenced to four years' penal servitude. Here the actions lost to public gaze—the true character stripped of the mask that had deceived society so long—may be taken up by the prison matron.

Although she was tried as Alice Grey, and was known at Millbank and Brixton Prisons by no other name, it was generally believed that the cognomen was an alias. O'Brien, Tureau, Carter, Armstrong, Huggard, Atkinson, and Brazil, were names that had each been adopted in turn—it was supposed at one period that her real name was Brazil, and that she was the wife of a soldier of that name; but at Millbank she spoke of being a single woman, and was extremely partial to the name by which she had become popularly known.

"I am the fascinating Alice Grey," she was fond of remarking in a boastful manner—"you all have heard of the celebrated Alice Grey."

She always alluded to herself by her Christian and surname with much egotistical satisfaction.

Alice was a woman of about seven-and-twenty years of age, when she made her appearance at Millbank; I believe she has never owned to that number of years, and that a less appears in the prison register. There is little dispute that she was a very handsome woman, and I have no doubt that her quiet

pretty face, her white skin, delicate colour, and soft voice, were great assistants to her pitiable tales, and helped her in her guilty schemes.

Grey began her term of penal servitude at Millbank in a very quiet manner, showing, however, an inability, and inaptitude for work, and a decided resolution to do no more than the law necessitated, on any pretence whatever.

"Her white hands had never been used to it," she said—"she had never earned a penny by them, and was not going to begin."

As for Government—

"Government will never be the better, even for sewing a button on, from Alice Grey," was her general remark; or—

"I'm not quite such a fool as to work—on, no, miss, not half such a fool—thank you all the same."

If remonstrated with, Alice Grey's suavity of demeanour would vanish, and she would return some answers very abrupt and rude, winding up with an oath, or an imprecation on the eyes and limbs of the remonstrant.

Throughout the whole term of her imprisonment, Grey sought to act the lady, looking down with contempt on the other prisoners, and refusing all association with them.

"They're so rude and vulgar, and so much below me. The poor things hardly know their right hands from the left."

To the matrons of the establishment she was equally as lofty—now and then, at Brixton, inclined, in a patronizing way, to converse with her officer, or in a mild manner to reprove her, and threaten a report if she were not more respectful in her demeanour. With the lady-superintendent she wished to exchange a word or two at times; but when making any appeal, or baffled in a purpose, Grey would lose all meekness of conduct, and use language such as the worst of prison women seldom indulged in. For it was an awfully blasphemous language, in which the Divine Names we are taught to reverence were coupled with such awful titles, that an officer was compelled, from very horror, to rush away from her.

Her cool impudence, both at Millbank and

Brixton, was characteristic to the last. It might happen that the superintendent, for some particular reason, wished to see Grey, and Grey would leave her cell in an indolent, lackadaisical manner, and dawdle on by the side of the matron towards the superintendent's quarters.

"Do make a little more haste," a matron said once to her under these circumstances.

"I shall take my time, miss," she responded quietly; "I never hurried for anybody yet, and I really shall not begin for the sake of a lady-superintendent. If the lady-superintendent wishes to see Alice Grey, she must wait till Alice Grey has a fitting time allowed to reach her!"

(These little impertinent remarks are constantly being overlooked by prison matrons, or it would be raining reports all day long. And strange as it may appear, a matron very punctual to the rules, and who for any infraction thereof reports too frequently her prisoners, is looked at with a certain amount of disfavour by the authorities.

"How is it, Miss ——, you have so many

complaints against your women?—they must be worse behaved, and therefore worse managed, than any other ward!" was once a superintendent's reproof to an over-energetic matron.)

Alice Grey professed herself a Catholic in prison. Attendance in chapel was optional with her in consequence; and although she condescended now and then to accompany her fellow-prisoners, she was strict in her devotions to the priest. It appeared to me that Grey was always anxious to deceive; that she was not happy without preying on some one's sensibilities, and playing her old part of victim. When transferred to Brixton —where her behavour, under less restraint, became more insolent and contemptuous—she suddenly took it into her head to write a long letter to the Roman Catholic priest, asking for a special visit on his part, as she was very miserable, and her heart was desperately troubled. If he would only come and reason with her, and talk with her a little!

At the time of Grey's notoriety, it was stated in more than one newspaper that her

real name was Huggard, and that she was a native of Limerick; and although she had a great objection to be considered Irish, there was a certain look and manner in her, indisputably appertaining to the sister isle.

"Lor' bless you, ma'am, she's Galway Irish," was a prisoner's criticism on her; "I've know'd lots of 'em."

Alice Grey, at Brixton, was for a little while in association with a Jewess, who was serving a long imprisonment for receiving stolen goods. The Jewess was a woman of education, and of staunch Israelitish principles, and Grey and she were accustomed to argue on religious topics, and on their respective faiths.

And whether Grey was influenced by the arguments of the Jewess, or her natural bad temper asserted itself more violently at this period, certain it is that her habits underwent a further change, and that she became more wild and blasphemous and insolent.

One evening, she proceeded, in a very methodical, business-like manner, to set her cell on fire, ripping up the bed, taking the coir

therefrom, and setting fire to that and the sheets, which she hung out of the cell window, for the amusement of those prisoners in the opposite wing who might be attracted by her eccentric proceedings. And the excitement of the wing prisoners—Grey was an inmate of the Old Prison at the time—was aroused to such a pitch, that it became the greatest difficulty to quiet them. Order was not restored till messages were forwarded to the Old Prison of the conduct of one of its inmates, and Alice Grey was removed to the "dark," where she spent eight-and-twenty days for this grave breach of prison discipline.

Grey never returned to her regular habits after this long confinement, although she refused needle-work, after the standard habit adopted from the first, and continued her resistance to rules in general. In the airing ground I have known her sit on the step of the laundry-door, or on a chance stool, and refuse to budge an inch, or walk with the other women.

"No, Miss ——, I shall not walk this

afternoon—I'm far from well, and far from strong, and no power can make me walk, if I don't want to walk."

"But the rule is ——"

"Oh! I don't want to hear anything about the rules—I shall not walk this afternoon, I assure you. You ought to know by this time, that when the fascinating Alice Grey makes up her mind to a thing, she generally accomplishes it, in one way or another."

Alice Grey so far played the invalid, or became under confinement so far a real invalid, as to be allowed to bring her stool into the airing-ground when she pleased, and take up her station apart from the women's regular procession. This is a privilege conceded to all women who are too weak to stand a full hour's exercise—a privilege that I have been always inclined to think was abused by Alice Grey.

Prior to this, Grey had succeeded in taming a sparrow, much after the principle of the prisoner mentioned in the early portion of this work, and to this little feathered stray she evinced

all the affection that it was in her nature to bestow. For any matron or prisoner, during her stay at the prisons, Grey had never shown one spark of interest, much less love; but for this sparrow there was evinced the love and the fretful jealousy of a child.

And whether walking round the airing-ground or sitting on her prison stool, there was the sparrow, on her finger or her shoulder, content with its position, and full of confidence in its protector. When Grey was in bed, and before the daylight lighted up the cell, the sparrow was accustomed to perch on her head and wait its mistress's attention, and she would sing and talk to it in a simple, artless manner, that was a striking contrast to her natural character.

Looking at her in those moments, one could scarcely believe her to be so crafty and dangerous a woman as her whole life's antecedents had proved.

She fretted about the sparrow for a little while when transferred to the Wing, but, recovering from her loss, took to religious argu-

ment with the Jewess, as before remarked, by way of distraction. And in the wing Grey gradually degenerated, became more insolent and fierce, lost her badge, and was degraded to the Old Prison, where she served her time out, doing little or nothing in the way of prison service—making a feint to tidy her cell at times; and in fact allowed to do, or to leave alone, almost what she liked.

To the last she expressed her confidence in being able to work her own way in the world again—never showing by a word her regret at the past sins she had committed, or the injuries to innocent persons of which she had been the cause.

Whether the old thoughts and plans for evil were busy in her brain when she left Brixton Prison, He who knoweth all thoughts can alone determine. As the name of Alice Grey has no more crossed our criminal records, let us at least think that her idea of "working her way" was by some new and honest method, in which her naturally keen judgment might assist her; and let us hope that she is following it up still, and is all the better woman for the effort.

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLESOME PRISONERS.

I AM anxious in the present chapter to devote a little attention to those prisoners who may be classed under the general title of troublesome. Not very well-behaved, not decidedly ill-behaved, but oscillating between one and the other—gaining promotion, falling back again—winning a badge, losing it in a fit of passion or a freak of insubordi-

nation; women whose characters are so hard to guess, and whose movements are so little to be reckoned on, that the constant, careful watching of the matrons knows no diminution.

They are, for the most part, the worst class of prisoners—minor copies of Ball, or Towers, or others of whom I have attempted a separate description, interspersed with a better class of character; women whose sense of humour or love of aggravation asserts itself too prominently, and brings the jester into trouble.

With their minor escapades, singular whims and fancies—their schemes for association, or for a berth in the infirmary—their efforts to get up "sensation scenes," and relieve the tediousness of regular discipline, I might fill the remainder of this volume. A few of these prisoners' tricks I jotted down at odd moments of leisure, and from my rough journal I now gather here and there a fragment of a prison life or character, which may help still further to convey to the reader some idea of what prisoners are, and what prison life really is.

In the first place, let me allude to one prisoner, at Millbank, who caused no little trouble and vexation to the matrons and the inmates of her own ward, by her persistence in a series of little tricks which kept the prison on the *qui vive*. The difficulty in restraining these humours of the prisoner arose from an inability to detect the culprit—one might have a suspicion of the real offender, but it was necessary to prove the fact, and catch the woman in the act.

The trick began in this manner. When all the women were locked up for the night, and the matron of the ward was every instant expecting the night-officer, vent was suddenly given from an unknown quarter to a piercing shriek. A sharp, sudden shriek, that was over in a minute, and seemed to leave a stillness deeper than before, until the women began hammering against their doors, and calling to the matron in attendance.

"Miss ——, some one's took ill!" was the general exclamation.

"Which woman is it?"

No one knew which woman or which cell it was; on further inquiry no one was discovered ill or ailing—no one acknowledged to the sudden outburst. The subject dropped—the matron gave a general remonstrance on the impropriety of the act—and the night-officer came on duty, and was requested to keep a sharp look-out and see if it were possible to discover the offender. But all remained still for the rest of the night, and the subject within the next four-and twenty hours was almost forgotten. However, at about the same time next night, and when the women were composing themselves for good—several of them were already in their beds and asleep—the same sharp, sudden cry rang out in the wards.

Renewed inquiries, careful investigation and cross-examination, and no satisfactory result obtained—the perpetrator of the act still wrapped in a veil of mystery, prison matrons and prisoners both equally puzzled.

The success of this trick appeared to warrant a second edition that night; a new fea-

ture of annoyance to prison matrons had been introduced, which worked well, and it became necessary to keep the officers stirring. Consequently in the middle of the night, just as the night-officer had left the ward and was proceeding to another part of the prison, utterance was given to the most awful and heart-piercing shriek that had ever rung in those dismal corridors.

This was too much for the patience of women never very patient at the best of times. They turned out of their beds and began shaking their doors with rage.

"Miss ——, just find out what fool that is, who's waking us up with her nonsense," shouted one.

"I wish I only knew!" vociferated another.

"Ain't we hardly worked enough in the day that we mustn't rest at night?" demanded a third woman.

"If she comes that caper agin, I'll keep you stirring, for I'll make a smash of it, blest if I don't!" threatened a fourth.

A fifth was cruelly sceptical as to whether

it was a prisoner at all, and not a bit of spite of the officer on duty; whilst a sixth clamoured for association, because she was sure it was the devil coming! The night-officer used her best exertions to discover the culprit, but in a full ward discovery was difficult, and the result was as fruitless as anticipated. As persistence in these sudden shrieks was calculated to subvert all discipline in that particular ward, it became necessary to quietly put an extra matron on the watch—a precaution which might have been attended with satisfactory results, if the shrieking had not ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

A few days extra attention, and then the matter dropped, the watching ceased, and—the shrieking began again! The same inquiries were made, again the same result, and again the extra vigilance, which happened to be always exercised at the wrong time, and invariably in the wrong place.

This little variation of duties continued for some time, despite several plans to discover the

delinquent, until one evening the matron made a feint of passing down the ward as usual, closed the door at the end somewhat demonstratively, and then noiselessly glided back to a position near the cells of one or two prisoners under suspicion. After waiting there with suspended breath for a while, she was rewarded by the sharp, sudden cry of a prisoner in the next cell but one to where she stood.

"Oh! it's you, is it!" was the exclamation, as she looked through the inspection; "well, what have you to say for perpetrating so silly a trick?"

"*Me!*"

"Yes; you don't wish to deny it, now I have found you out?"

"Well, miss—you see, it was only a little bit of fun of mine!"

But the fun of hers was reported to the superintendent, and atoned for by due penance; and the prison matrons have always considered it a great blessing that this unseasonable pleasantry did not become fashionable

amongst a class famous for its mimicry of most things.

Mention has already been made in these pages of McWilliams, as partner in the wholesale destruction of glass, with Nicholas, at Brixton Prison—a woman so famous for breaking out, and all defiance of prison rules, that in the Director's book of characters there is scored against her name "*Incorrigible.*" And although McWilliams has had superiors—if there be any superiority in the art of mischief—she deserves all the credit that appertains to such objectionable proceedings, for her unceasing schemes to harass and confuse all in authority above her.

On being given a new cell broom one day, McWilliams was heard a few minutes afterwards shrieking with laughter in her cell.

"What's the matter, McWilliams?"

"Nothing particular, ma'am—only—oh! dear, it does look so funny—I have been cutting the broom's hair. It's much too long, miss, according to the rules."

And, sure enough, McWilliams had cut every hair of the broom short to the wooden

stump, and destroyed its sweeping capabilities for ever. Punished for this freak, the next act of irregularity exhibited by this prisoner was to walk to chapel with bare feet, an act unobserved by the matron in attendance, until the service was half completed, and McWilliams with cool impudence was thrusting out her bare feet and legs from her dress, to the intense amusement of her fellow-prisoners.

To prisoners' tricks at school, I shall presently refer in my chapter on the prison school-room; and concerning those fancies which are not tricks, and give but little extra trouble to the matron, I have also a word or two to say in a befitting place. Of many characteristic acts much mention has been made, and is still to be made in those special chapters devoted to the purpose; it is needless to add that I do not seek to enumerate all the petty schemes which are constantly being formed by those women who keep to penal wards and refractory cells, and have no ambition for a badge.

The schemes to obtain a place in the

infirmary are unceasing. Amongst them are many instances of self-mutilation, personal damage, and wanton destruction of health, which appear to be regarded as nothing in the balance with a few privileges and a higher scale of diet; and whether the illness be natural, or forced by the woman on herself, there is no keeping her from the infirmary ward, if she be resolved upon obtaining a place there. A woman will coolly pound a piece of glass to powder, and bring on internal hæmorrhage, nay, often bring herself to the dark threshold of death's door, for the mere sake of the change. Bad hands, and arms, and feet will be studiously contrived by means of scissors, thimble, a half-penny fastened to a wound; madness will be feigned, staylaces will be twisted round the neck till respiration almost ceases; women more desperate still will run the risk of hanging themselves, in the hope of being cut down in time and taken to the infirmary.

The hanging process betrays much ingenuity as well as moral perversity, and is generally

managed in this fashion by women who desire a little change. The button of the "inspection," or the iron work of the ventilator above the door, is generally chosen; to make a better case of it, the ventilator is selected by women of more nerve. Having procured a piece of list, or string, or taken the rope from her bed—there is no keeping every implement of self-destruction from a woman—the prisoner stands on her pail or stool, fastens the end of her string to the ventilator, puts her head into a running noose, and then gives a kick to her pail, which sends the water streaming underneath the door over the flag-stones of the ward. The appearance of the water suggests something unusual to the matron on duty—the door is attempted to be opened—a heavy swinging substance, to the matron's horror, is felt inside the door; extra assistance is called, the woman is cut down, and the doctor is hastily sent for. Every effort is used to restore the woman to consciousness, and the final result is association or the infirmary, according to the extent of

injury committed. Many awkward mistakes have followed these desperate means—many errors of judgment have nearly ended in a fate unbargained for. Eliza Burchall, a prisoner of Brixton Prison, concocted a scheme of this character with a second prisoner, who was to discover her hanging at a stated time, on coming out of chapel, when she was accidentally to take a matron to Burchall's cell, on an excuse of articles left there during association. Burchall, hearing footsteps approaching a few minutes before the appointed time, leaped off as arranged, and the footsteps *passed the door, and went on down the ward.* Her confederate, some three minutes afterwards, arrived in charge of the matron who was to open Burchall's cell and demand the missing property; and Burchall, to all appearances dead, was discovered hanging by the neck. In this instance, a return to life was despaired of—the long period she had been suspended, the rigid limbs, the swollen, livid features, seemed all evidences that playing at death had become death in earnest; and it was only by the unceasing exertions of the

surgeon—and a more earnest, skilful professor of the great art of healing does not exist than Mr. Rendle of Brixton Prison — that the rash woman was brought back from the very brink of eternity, after remaining unconscious for three and forty hours.

Hanging on a less elaborate principle is adopted by more nervous women; tying a stay-lace round the neck, till the eyes nearly drop out of the head, and then waiting patiently for the arrival of the next comer, is quite a fashionable amusement, and, the reason considered for the act, answers tolerably well.

Tricks are played by prisoners often without an ostensible object. I have a remembrance of one woman named Jarvis, at Millbank, whose efforts to place her head in remarkable positions caused great embarrassment to the officers in charge. Wherever there was space to squeeze a head, this woman's soon found its way, and there it would remain a fixture for hours, although its removal was generally at the option of the prisoner. In each of the refractory cell doors is a small

trap, used for passing the food to the prisoners, and through this aperture would the woman's head be thrust, with a silly, defiant expression of countenance.

It was a ludicrous part of a matron's duty to stand in the ward, arguing with this woman, and begging her to take her head in; all her expostulations eliciting, by way of a reply, only an idiotic stare. Endeavouring to open the door might have led to the dislocation of the prisoner's neck, and only an urgent remonstrance could be made. Jarvis, or "crying Jarvis," as she was termed by the prisoners, was considered to be a little weak in intellect, and certainly this extraordinary freak does not warrant me in estimating her as sane. The extra duty she entailed on her officer may be readily imagined when medical orders were issued that the woman was not to be left with her head in that position, as, if her feet were to give way beneath her, death would infallibly ensue.

The guards were accustomed to be called in to Jarvis's head at all hours of the day and night, and efforts were made to gently force it

through the aperture again; if successful, the trap was immediately closed; if unsuccessful, a matron sat down to keep watch on this aggravating head.

Strict orders were given not to open the trap of Jarvis's door; but the force of habit would lead the matron, almost unconsciously, to unfasten it, when, as quick as a Jack-in-the-box, and almost on the same principle, Jarvis's head would immediately appear.

Tears of bitter repentance over her treacherous memory would the matron shed, as the head refused to be withdrawn, and the watching of it became once more an extra prison duty. If Jarvis were more than usually troublesome or irritable, and the physical force used was successful in removing her head from its peculiar position, she would fling herself on her back, and commence a violent kicking on the floor with her heels, that would last for twenty-four hours, without an instant's cessation.

Jarvis's head, and even Jarvis's heels, were always getting into extraordinary posi-

tions, however close the watch and careful the actions of the matron in attendance; and the name of crying Jarvis, to any of the old staff of either Millbank or Brixton Prison, will be followed by a fervent prayer that that eccentric woman may never meet with penal servitude again.

Returning to the old subject of schemes for obtaining admission into the infirmary, pricking the gums with a needle may be mentioned as a common practice—the prisoner fears "she's bust a wessel, because the blood keeps coming up in her mouth so." And soap pills for sham fits and frothing at the mouth, are as much in request at our Government prisons as amongst those street impostors who horrify a London audience.

There are women also who will stretch themselves out awfully "stiff and stark" in their beds, and so well assume the appearance of death as to deceive the matron in charge, who, finding the prisoner has not responded to her call, enters the cell to see if anything has happened.

In some cases the doctor is sent for

If the woman is known to be an old offender, a pint of water is suddenly dashed into her face, when, as a rule, she will leap up in bed and utter a torrent of oaths at the indignity.

In one instance, where a woman stoutly insisted upon being dead, notwithstanding all natural appearances to the contrary, another prisoner who chanced to be in attendance hit upon the happy idea of thrusting her finger-nail between the nail and the flesh of the apparently deceased, when the woman bounced up, shook her clenched fist at her torturer, and yelled forth, "Oh, Sal, you are a —— brute!"

Another of the prisoners at Millbank possessed such a peculiar and unusual capacity for self-inflation, as to deceive for some time even the medical attendant, who imagined that she was suffering from some natural malady. She would expand herself to an astounding degree, her size becoming greater every instant, and alarming all her watchers. Removal to the infirmary often became necessary, where in time she would recover—sit up for a few days—

take to her bed once more, and then begin again gradually to expand. Doubt of the genuineness of this woman's affliction having at last suggested itself to the medical attendant, from some suspicious gasps that seemed indulged in for the sole purpose of taking in more atmospheric element, chloroform was suddenly administered, with an effect in every respect surprising. The inflation disappeared when the woman's powers of inhaling became temporarily suspended, and the deception was at last clearly traceable to the right cause. This prisoner's marvellous powers of expansion were, notwithstanding the discovery, still practised with more or less success during her stay in prison. A trick, or not a trick, it exhausted her strength to that extent that infirmary treatment and diet could not be refused her.

It is often very difficult to distinguish between real and fancied infirmities, if the woman be clever at deception. There are some instances in which matrons, and even surgeons, have been puzzled to the last.

A case recurs to me of a woman at Brixton Prison; a poor, weakly creature, whose infirmities became apparently so great that for some years she spent the greater part of her time in bed. At times she would make an effort to busy herself about her cell, or walk as far as the airing-ground, moaning feebly to herself, and doubling one of her legs under her with a very characteristic limp. So intense were apparently her sufferings, that when she finally kept her bed for six or seven months—some who tell this story assert that she spent the last twelve months in bed—it was mercifully resolved to commute her sentence by two years, in consideration of her great infirmities.

And whether she were an impostor or not, certain it is that the day after the news was received she suddenly re-appeared in the prison, tidying and dusting her cell, and with no signs left of her excruciating limp. She was considered an impostor for the time, although many attributed the temporary disappearance of her malady to the re-action of the nerves on the receipt of such

good news as two years less of prison service.

At all events, the bodily prostration and the limp came back again before the day was out, which was consistent policy if she were an impostor, and a curious instance of the effect of sudden good news if she were not. Of her behaviour out of prison nothing is known; my own opinion concerning her is, that there was a great deal of deception allied to natural weakness, and that with one little variation from her *rôle*, she played her part with a skill far beyond the average.

One of the greatest tricks in my experience of prison life was perpetrated some years since by two women at Millbank. I say the greatest, not that there was much ingenuity or even daring in the act, but that the excitement amongst prison officers was greater than at any other time which I can call to memory.

The roof of the building then used as a laundry ran under the windows of the prisoners' cells, and from these windows a woman

named Maxwell and another contrived to remove all impediments in their way, and squeeze themselves through to the roof of the laundry, where they were shortly afterwards discovered by the guards, coolly promenading.

Alarm was by this time given from the interior that two women were missing from their cells, and the guards made their appearance round the laundry, to prevent all attempt at further descent. The women, who had no intention of escaping, amused themselves with deriding the officials below, feigning to make leaps from the roof into the airing-yard beneath, and executing little comic dances of defiance.

But an end was put to this divergence from the ordinary routine by ladders being brought to the laundry, and a simultaneous rush made upon them by two or three guards. The women offered no resistance, although they were both desperate characters—a scuffle on the roof of a house, with the prospect of an unceremonius dash into the yard beneath, not being to their taste. They accepted their handcuffs without a murmur, and went down the ladders and off to the "dark"

in an exultant mood: it had been a great change for them, and they had enjoyed it very much!

Perhaps as great a piece of impudence was perpetrated at a later date by another prisoner, who was a woman of no very great muscular power to look at—in fact, one whose general appearance was altogether deceptive. She was of the incorrigible order, setting all rules at defiance, and as partial to "breakings out" as the worst of her contemporaries.

The principal feat for which she was celebrated at Millbank was that of suddenly rushing at a guard, six feet in height, whom special business had brought for an instant to the woman's side of the prison, fling her arms round his capacious waist, lift him bodily from the ground, and run with him a distance of thirty or forty yards, amidst a roar of laughter from the women, and the attempts of the matrons in attendance to appear preternaturally solemn and shocked. The astonishment, suppressed rage, and discomfiture of the big warder would

have afforded a study for George Cruikshank in his best days—never was the dignity of office more suddenly outraged and transformed to burlesque.

And burlesque will here and there start forth in the most unlikely places, and even prison walls will ring with laughter. There are few places so wholly dark but that a ray of light will brighten them at times.

CHAPTER IV.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—MARIA COPES.

THE last published report of the Directors of Convict Prisons directed attention to a prisoner at Millbank, whose conduct was so extraordinary and outrageous, as to be more that of a wild beast than a reflecting, rational human being. Even in the annals of prison life she stands an anomaly, her actions having been so far removed from those of other prisoners as to render her worthy of special mention in a Parliamentary paper.

The woman mentioned in that report, and who forms the subject of the present sketch, was Maria Copes, still serving out her time, and still oscillating between the prisons of Millbank and Brixton. (It is fair to add, however, that Copes is now making, for the first time, some little effort to turn over a new leaf, and has been several months without incurring a report.)

Copes, it may be premised, is a giantess in appearance; powerfully made, with a pair of broad shoulders and muscular arms, worthy of a member of the pugilistic profession. A woman with no common sense, devoid of all common feeling even for her own sufferings, and of all reflection on the punishments that must follow her outbreaks, dark cells, handcuffs, and strait-waiscoats having no terrors for her. It is to this woman that I indirectly alluded in my sketch of Ball, as Ball's superior in the art of aggravation and resistance. Skilful with her hands, her feet, her teeth, and possessed of extraordinary strength, it may be imagined that Copes was no easy subject to

deal with in her evil hours. For instance, it might happen that on some day she would suddenly refuse to take air, saying:—

"There's no occasion why I should take air—what's the good of air to me? Just be off, and leave me alone, while I'm quiet."

If this hint were not immediately attended to, she would scream like a hyæna, dash at her cell door, and shake it with a force that in very violent paroxysms would perhaps leave it in her hands.

Breaking furniture, smashing glass, tearing blankets and rug after the old prison fashion, were mere trifles to Copes; the table was reduced to firewood in an instant, gas pipes were torn down, the sides of tin cans were flattened together, and a greater number of men were always required to force her into a refractory cell than had ever been engaged on the same duties since Millbank Prison scowled across the water at the Vauxhall wharves.

Getting Copes into a refractory or dark cell was no easy matter; getting her, as soon as

possible, out of those quarters, became another duty to be immediately attended to. When placed in the "dark," it was found that she had a partiality to leaping from one side of the cell to the other, taking "headers" as it were against the opposite wall; or else assuming a crouching position in the corner, she would curl her arms round her knees, and commence a series of violent swinging motions that brought her head rapidly against the wall, with a sickening series of cracks that would have ended in concussion of the brain with any other prisoner. If not thus agreeably occupied, she would wrench up the flooring of "the darks," and batter away with the planks at the door, till the whole prison seemed coming down at once. It became soon generally understood that Copes was too violent even for "darks" and "refractories;" canvas jackets were of little use, for she ripped them up and burst them asunder as though they had been prison sheeting; and handcuffs she broke or bit away from her wrists, and, failing that, tried to dash her brains out with them.

These extraordinary paroxysms of passion would last for days, and defeat all efforts to reduce them by restraint; the power to injure herself it was difficult to deprive her of, and she was more insensible to the pain she inflicted than were those compelled to be the witnesses of her self-torture. It became necessary to confine her in the padded cell, a room generally reserved for mad prisoners, the walls of which are thickly padded to within a few inches of the ceiling. Here she would climb about like a cat, and often be found wriggling herself round the room several feet above the heads of her observers. She was as supple and as agile as a panther, and possessed all the strength of that creature of the forest.

Copes finished her feats in the padded room by tearing down with her teeth all the strongly-fixed canvas, supports, and stuffing, and piling up the ground with the *débris*. I believe this was the first time that ever the feat was accomplished, and the strength and ingenuity by which she succeeded in the attempt must have verged on the superhuman. She

became very vain of this last exploit—which she repeated several times—and used to boast of it to her fellow-prisoners, who were compelled after that to sit up with her night and day, for fear of the harm she might perpetrate on herself.

Tightly secured in canvas jackets of an extra thickness, it became necessary to feed Copes with a spoon—a process which she objected to strongly, and for which she showed her contempt in a manner at once novel and characteristic. She would stand very quietly and receive a spoonful of her gruel, then give a cat-like run up the prison wall, blow the food from her mouth through the window, spring down again with pantomimic celerity, and place herself in position for the next modicum of gruel, to be served in the same way, until the whole was disposed of. If the women in association with her were withdrawn for a few minutes, she would often be found on her return divested of the canvas jacket, and with the ceiling of her cell torn down and covering the floor!

A special consultation between the resident surgeon, Dr. Guy, the medical superintendent —the worthy, kind, and clever successor to the late lamented Dr. Baly—and Dr. Forbes Winslow, resulted in the conviction that Copes was of perfectly sound mind—indulging in the mere eccentricities, I may add, of a woman naturally playful!

After her fits of insubordination Copes was accustomed to sober down a little, to do her work regularly, and to behave like the other prisoners. She was always carefully watched, however,—matrons were warned of her, and prisoners cautioned not to cross her; but she took offence at so many little trifles, and was always so full of whims and fancies in herself, that studying Copes was of very little use.

Strangely enough, though the most violent woman in prison service, she never indulged in the foul, abominable language common to prisoners in their paroxysms. She never made use of an oath during the whole time of my knowledge of her.

Copes sobering down somewhat, endeavours were made to induce her to take exercise, and by dint of much coaxing she one afternoon proceeded, like a sulky elephant, into the airing-ground of Millbank Prison. Here affairs seemed progressing in a satisfactory manner, until, becoming tired of the monotony, and anxious to create a little diversion, she squatted down in a corner of the yard, and proceeded to rock herself backwards and forwards, in much the same style as she was accustomed to in the "darks," bringing her hard skull with violence against the bricks with every oscillation.

Some of the women shrieked, and ran to stop her—Copes broke into one of her old frenzies—a posse of guards arrived to the rescue, and she was borne away to her old refractory quarters.

"I told you I wasn't going to walk, and that I didn't like air," she grumbled by way of explanation for her outbreak, a few days afterwards.

Copes in due time was sent on to Brixton,

where the new rules and new faces brought on for a while the old irritable fits, until she "took a turn," as it were, and gave evidence of sobering down.

She is now, I hear, proceeding calmly and methodically in the regular routine, and everyone is thinking how nicely Copes is going on, and how wonderfully she has altered for the better. Whether a change is yet to come "o'er the spirit of her dream," and she is again to make havoc with prison property, and render nugatory all methods yet adopted for the regulation and order of female convict establishments, it is impossible to guess. She has promised to amend, and leaves "for good" next April, I believe—so there is much to hope for.*

* Since writing the above, April has passed, and Maria Copes is free. Her conduct on the whole at Brixton Prison was just "passable."

CHAPTER V.

THE PRISON SCHOOL.

GOVERNMENT makes a wise effort to afford our unruly children some little idea of right, in contradistinction to the lessons conned in the darker school where there are ever pupils apt at ill instruction.

In justice to my subject, I must say, that the schooling system is far from a perfect one —does not work well—even irritates the women. Perhaps it would be hard for most of us to sit down late in life to learn school lessons; to these women who have known no

lessons in their childhood, whose minds are set to ignorance, and on whom a ray of light is torture, the prison school is almost unendurable.

I cannot think that so much attention has been given to the schools as the subject is deserving of. The machinery to do good is existent; but it appears to me that it is not fairly worked. *There is no incentive to learn*, and the women sit down to their lessons with more doggedness and moroseness than they exhibit when they turn to their daily labour.

"What's the good of my learning at this time of life?" one woman will say. And I have often heard another exclaim, "I'd rather have six months —nine months—longer sentence than this sort of work. It's awful hard!"

They sit at their desks, a posse of unruly children, more ignorant and unteachable than any child can possibly be, growling discontent over their lessons, and seeking to evade them. Over such a grisly array of pupils the two schoolmistresses in attendance possess little, if any, power.

At Millbank the instruction is cellular Three

or four years since some new arrangements were made at that prison, and have since been followed up with a little more success, although I can scarcely credit the fact that the number who are still unable to write their own letters when transferred to Brixton are comparatively few. In fact, the reports of the chaplains at Brixton and Fulham, to which these women are drafted, allege almost the reverse. "The educational state of the prisoners who have been received during the year has not been encouraging," asserts the Rev. J. Moran, of Brixton Prison. The following return of school duties at Millbank Prison, I extract from the report of 1860:—

"School is held in each ward twice a week, for an hour and a half at a time. The number of schoolmistresses assigned to a ward is four, and as a ward contains on an average about twenty-eight prisoners, each teacher has thus seven prisoners to instruct, to each of whom (for they are taught individually in their cells) the time permits her to give a lesson of about thirteen minutes' duration on the average. During the school hour all work

is suspended. On the commencement of school the prisoners are set to write, and while they are thus employed the teachers are passing from cell to cell, giving to each, in turn, a short reading lesson, and pointing out any defects in the writings that need correction. When the teacher leaves, the prisoner resumes her writing, if not already finished, or, if she has finished her writing, goes over by herself the lesson just received. Under the former arrangement each schoolmistress had a certain number of wards assigned to her, each of which she visited twice in the week, teaching in the ward for half a day each time during which the prisoners were at liberty to lay aside their work in order to make preparations for the schoolmistress. It was found, however, that, except in the case of some few anxious to improve themselves, no preparation was made, and that beyond the few minutes' actual instruction by the schoolmistress, nothing was done by the prisoners for themselves. Under these circumstances their progress could not be satisfactory. Another defect of the old arrangement was, that it ad-

mitted of little or no supervision of the teaching on the part of the chaplain. A remedy is found for this in the present plan, which, by bringing the teachers together in a single ward at a time, rather than distributing them singly throughout several wards, enables the chaplains to superintend their work, and also better to stimulate and encourage the prisoners by occasionally himself testing their progress."

The prison school-room at Brixton is a large room built out from that part of the building termed the Old Prison, and generally known by the name of Number 1. The women are taught once a-week in classes of fifty at a time; the wing women generally of a morning, from ten till half-past twelve; the old prison women, and consequently the worst behaved, of an afternoon, and for a period of time somewhat less than women of the second or first class.* On Saturdays there is a school held for the laundry wards, on which day another room is opened, and a hundred women are taught at

* The slight alteration of teaching the women in smaller classes has been recently tried with satisfactory results.

once, by four schoolmistresses. Two schoolmistresses compose the staff, but the ladies holding the positions of librarian's and chaplain's clerk at Brixton assume for the nonce a position as preceptors. It must be understood that everybody is compelled to attend school, with the exception of sick prisoners, or prisoners confined in the refractory cells for insubordination. Lady prisoners, whose education may be in advance of the schoolmistress's, sit side by side with the woman who stumbles over a word of one syllable, or cannot read at all, and who sits glowering at her book, inwardly cursing its contents.

The two schoolmistresses sit in the centre of the room, having the women on three sides of them. Each schoolmistress attends to five and twenty women, whilst facing the fifty prisoners is the matron, whose duty it is to keep a careful watch, and allow no surreptitious whispering. And it is singular the little respect and awe that are shown for the two schoolmistresses, and the power that is possessed by the matron over that ward of fifty prisoners. If the matron glance aside, whispering begins

at once, and no threats or warning of the schoolmistresses have any effect upon their pupils.

The schoolmistress appeals to the matron on duty if there be too much talking, and the matron calls to order and reproves the unruly. Bible reading in classes is adopted by those who have a fair knowledge of their letters, and a strange gabble of sounds it is proceeding from these women. There is, however, an objection to reading aloud amongst them, and it is only by the matron's continual remonstrance that the majority of the women can be induced to read at all. Those who have yet their letters to learn have special lessons given them, and great is the difficulty to surmount the first barriers in the way of education. Women more ignorant and stupid than these prisoners it is impossible to conceive; to teaching them becomes a hopeless task—the little progress made one week is entirely forgotten the next, and has to be re-learned, with the same stolidity of manners and vacuity of countenance. Teaching for two hours, or two hours and a half, once

a-week, with no lessons to learn in the interim, is a burlesque of teaching with such indocile pupils.

Reading in Bible-class and a writing lesson constitute almost all the school duties required of the women. Originally copy-books were given to them, until the leaves began to disappear, and to be used for furtive correspondence; latterly a single sheet of paper is laid before each woman, and collected at the end of school hours, the performance thereon being duly criticized.

At one period an attempt was made to teach the elementary rules of arithmetic, a variation which unfortunately proved a signal failure. It was the last feather on the camel's back, and the women would have nothing to do with such arduous mental exertion. To do them justice, they made the attempt; but the extraordinary answers that were returned to questions the most simple, and the shouts of laughter from the women at the desks at the blunders of those who had found courage to respond, were subversive of good order, often of good temper. A scene like the subjoined was of common occurrence:—

"Attention, please. Twice two?"

"Four," would be responded pretty generally.

"Twice three?"

Affairs would be growing difficult, and out of twenty-five women six or seven would venture to reply, "Six."

"Twice four?"

Dead silence, to be suddenly broken by one voice crying out "Nine," at which there would be a roar of laughter from the rest of the class.

"What are you laughing at, stupids?" I have heard a woman passionately exclaim; "I'll fetch one of you a hit of the mouth in a minute, if you don't stop grinning."

"Jackson, I shall report you," remonstrates the matron on the watch.

"I ain't come here to be laughed at, miss, I can tell you!"

Jackson will probably subside, if the matron be a woman of tact and well acquainted with the humours of the prisoners.

Arithmetic proving a failure, teaching resolved itself again into Bible-class and writing-

lesson, which I believe has continued to this day, without any change from the wearisome monotony.*

The old prison women are naturally more difficult to manage than the wing women; and if there were a general mutiny in the school amongst the former, there would be little chance for the one matron and two schoolmistresses against fifty furious prisoners.

The old prisoners come to school with more reluctance than the wing women; often lump them-

* My observations on this head appear at variance with the list of school-books mentioned in the report. The following works I perceive are set down:—Class Reading Books, Nos. 4, 5, and 6; Adult Lesson Book; "History of England;" "Catechism of History of England;" "Catechism of Astronomy;" "Catechism of Geography;" "Catechism of Modern History;" "Stewart's Geography;" "First Book of Arithmetic:" "Spelling Book, superseded by Sullivan," &c., &c. Half of these works I have seen on the shelves; the other half I have no knowledge of, having never even heard them alluded to. I am convinced no body of female convicts could be made to receive lessons from one-tenth of them. With regard to the first book of arithmetic, it may be as well to add that a sum is still occasionally worked on a large slate, at which the women gape and stare, but gather nothing from.

selves down on the forms and open their Bibles with an impatient dab upon the desk.

Occasionally it happens that a prisoner will sit down in a corner and refuse to read or write, remaining there stolid and defiant during the whole time allotted to prisoners' education.

"I can't stand it, miss—it only drives me silly," the woman may exclaim, in reply to her matron's reproof; "I'll be quiet here. I shan't do any reading to-day—catch me at it!"

Another of the old prison women will suddenly leap to her feet with a stifled exclamation which may pass for a mild remonstrance or a muttered oath, and stride over her form indignantly.

"Miss ——, I want to go back to my cell."

"Wait till schooling is over, Jones."

The woman shakes her head savagely.

"I'm sick of schooling. You'd better take me back to my cell—I shall only make a row here. Don't say I haven't given you warning."

If the woman steadily persist, for the sake of peace and quietness the matron allows her to withdraw, accompanies her to her particular ward, and locks her up in her cell. On her

return to the schoolroom, the prisoners will invariably be discovered talking at the top of their voices, deaf to the reproofs of the schoolmistresses, and stolidly oblivious of their presence. Quarrels have begun on the old subject of "palling in;" jealous mutterings echo from one form to another; threats of punching each other's heads, and scratching out each other's eyes, are prolific, and it requires all the matron's power to subdue these angry waters, and cast oil upon them, before the tempest rages forth in earnest.

It is the matron's most difficult task to keep these women subordinate to prison rules in school hours, and extra insubordination is considered the matron's fault, and punished by a fine.

Instances have occurred of a refractory pupil suddenly losing all command of temper, and flinging her books unceremoniously at the head of a woman who has offered her an insult, in the shape of a grimace or a laugh at her peculiar style of reading. It is needless to inform the reader, who, if he has faithfully followed me, must have obtained a fair insight into prison character, that these stormy

variations of temper spread like wild-fire, and offer temptations to follow a similar example, that it is difficult for unsettled natures to resist.

During the last half hour of "schooling" the women, weary of tuition, begin to talk and whisper together; if not too loudly, the matron, as a general rule, allows the little privilege of a gossip. But the ways of one matron are not those of another in the schoolroom—each has her own peculiar style of management, and according to the good sense and discretion of the officer, so is there more or less discipline in school hours.

A bad officer loses half the command over her women at these times—fifty unruly natures together in one room are hard to keep in a semblance of quiescence, when books are wearisome, and blots and splashes plentiful.

Occasionally the superintendent, the deputy, or the chaplain will enter, and a general rising of the inmates of the room take place—a few prisoners, if of a sullen turn, feigning not to notice the arrivals, until attention is directed to their breach of courtesy by the matron in attendance.

Superintendent, deputy, or chaplain having departed, after asking a few questions,—perhaps on the progress of the women,—the school subsides, and lessons are resumed.

Time for dismissal having arrived, the schoolmistress raps the table, and the women rise, whilst she utters the prayer of dismissal used in our churches: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all evermore. Amen." In earlier times it was usual to substitute a verse of a hymn in lieu of this solemn petition,—that beautiful verse, commencing—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

But the women, with little reverence in their natures, and glad of an opportunity of exercising their voices, gave vent to such vociferous bawling, and such sly wicked additions of their own to the verse, that it became necessary to discontinue singing, and to substitute the prayer already mentioned.

School over, the first twenty-five women, with as much delight as was ever evinced by a restless crowd of boys turning out of a

village school to a breezy common, start from their forms towards the door, the matron using her best endeavours to send them out with some semblance of order. The more artful of them may, before this time, have filled their thimbles with ink, intending to make off with a small modicum of that fluid, to be used in correspondence with a "pal" in some other portion of the prison.

This thimble the woman will carry in her hand to her cell, sometimes betraying herself by dropping the ink on the stones, or spilling it over her dress; and if ingenious enough to keep it concealed till dinner time, will sink it in half her dinner loaf, and put by that half till tea time.

"Not at all hungry to-day, miss," is her excuse, "perhaps my appetite will come round by tea."

And so for one meal the half loaf is allowed to remain, and this is no infraction of the prison rules.

The above is a fair sketch of prison schooling; very little is learned, and the school-

mistress finds it uphill work to drill some seeds of learning into the heads of these ignorant, often brutal, women. Still it is a step in the right direction, from which much good might be evolved if the requisite care were taken, and the requisite means to work good put into form and carried out. The machinery is at fault, I have observed: the lessons are monotonous—no interest is taken in their studies by the women, and there is no sympathy between schoolmistresses and pupils. But it is a good feature in our prisons; and education is a stanch opponent to crime. With every good seed sown, an evil one dies to make room for it; and the sowing of that seed in the proper and most fitting manner is worth a little more consideration on the part of those who have the genius to suggest amendments, and the power to carry those amendments out.

CHAPTER VI.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—SARAH BAKER, MARY MAY, AND THE JEWESS.

In Millbank and Brixton Prisons were, and are, many prisoners whose traits of character are worth preserving. They stand a little apart from the general body, and I should not be doing justice to my task were I to wholly pass them by. They are not characters very striking, neither is any remarkable incident connected with them, but there is sufficient interest attached to each to warrant an appearance in these pages.

I have no doubt that the story of Sarah Baker has long since been forgotten by newspaper readers, notwithstanding that much public sympathy was evinced for her at the time of trial.

Sarah Baker was tried for the murder of her infant, at the Stafford Assizes, in July, 1853. It may be remembered by a few that the case was a pitiable one, and the crime awful in its character. The old story of man's temptation and woman's fall, ending in the birth of a child, which she was totally unable to support. The circumstances were aggravated by the facts that her seducer had fled the country, in order to avoid the liability of supporting her child, and that at the end of a year he had returned and married another woman. Sarah Baker, the story runs, strove for a long while against the adverse current, in the hope of supporting herself and child, and, finally, becoming desperate, took the child to a deserted pit-shaft and threw it down. An attempt was made by her counsel to obtain her acquittal on the ground of insanity; but the jury found her guilty of murder, at the same time strongly

recommending her to mercy, on account of the distressing nature of the case, and the morbid condition of mind under which she laboured when the deed was perpetrated. The jury's recommendation was forwarded to the proper quarter, and Sarah Baker's sentence of death was commuted to penal servitude for life.

Sarah Baker arrived at Millbank Prison a very young, delicate woman, took her place in her ward at coir picking, very willingly, and soon became distinguished from the mass, as an obedient, even cheerful prisoner. I am inclined to think that a great deal of public sympathy was wasted on this woman, and that for the crime itself, and its consequences, Baker felt little remorse. There was a hardness, even a callousness in her manner of alluding to the crime, that showed the heart had not been wrung much by the guilty act which had deprived her child of life.

"I was obliged to throw the little beggar over," it is reported Baker said one day to a woman to whom she was detailing the incidents of the dark past, "it made such an awful row."

Baker's health, both at Millbank and Brixton, was variable—is still, I believe, on the decline. When out of the infirmary she was a good servant, worked industriously, was civil to her matrons, and preserved a far more cheerful demeanour than the majority of the prisoners.

The past crime did not press heavily on her conscience, I have observed; but it is a remarkable fact that these serious acts seldom do. Women who are in for murder, more especially for the murder of their children, are, as a rule, the best behaved, the most light-hearted prisoners. I may add here that with all the prisoners the crime is of little account, and the sentence for it only a subject to be deplored. It is always a harsh sentence, or an unjust one.

"If old Judge ——, or that ——, had been on circuit, instead of ——, I shouldn't have had all this time to serve!"

If Baker live to July, 1863, the probability is that she will obtain her liberty—life women standing a chance of freedom after ten years' service.

Mary May was a prisoner of a different stamp—a woman who served four years for petty larceny, and went back to the world —a young, fair-haired woman, a staunch Catholic, and, let me add, a saucy, quarrelsome prisoner, who required considerable attention on the part of the matrons. She affected a supreme contempt for the other prisoners, albeit her own ignorance was something remarkable.

"I can't speak to 'em, miss," she would say, confidentially; "they are such a set of rubbitch."

And when she *did* speak to them it was in answer to a taunt of some description, which elicited another taunt, and very often ended in blows being exchanged, and May and her antagonist taking their places in the "dark." If she were fortunate enough to obtain her badge, she very quickly lost it, and went back to a lower position and another "set of rubbitch."

To a certain extent she was a half-witted woman. In the airing ground about once a fortnight, she would sidle up to the matron

and ask, in a confidential whisper, if she might be permitted to speak a word. Permission granted, she would say—

"I want to know about my time, miss. Can you give me any idea as to the day, yourself, now?"

Mary May knew to the hour when her time would expire, but she was anxious to compare notes with some one also acquainted with her term of service. She was inclined to labour under a delusion that there was a mistake somewhere, which, being rectified, would lead to her liberty coming a little earlier than expected.

"I shall have a fortune before I am out, miss," she was in the habit of saying; "there's a little property coming to me soon, with the blessing of God. Quite a snug little property, miss."

And one day, late in her time of servitude, she came with a radiant countenance across the airing yard.

"May I speak a word to you?"

"What is it, May?"

"I've come into my little bit of property—

I had a letter this morning from my friends, telling me all about it."

"I'm very glad to hear it, May. You'll be a better and different woman now."

"Yes, miss, by the blessing of God. And may I beg the obleeging of another favour—have you heard anything about my time, miss?"

"Not lately."

"There's not likely to be any alteration, because I've come into my property, I suppose?"

"I am afraid not."

"Oh dear!" with a weary sigh, "I shall be very glad to get clear of all this rubbitch."

May returned to her place amongst the prisoners, to muse over her property, and speculate as to its disposition in the good time lying beyond her prison life. And that she had been left some seventy or eighty pounds I believe was quite correct. To such a woman it was a fortune, and was doubtless afterwards a means of keeping her from fresh temptation.

Mary May was a gross flatterer, too. The matrons were all looking "exceedingly hand-

some this morning!" "Lord bless their fine eyes, what lovely creatures they all were!"

"Bless your handsome face!—how charming you are looking this morning, Miss ——," she said once to me at Millbank; "there's a kind of colour on your cheeks that just sets you off like. My dear, good soul," with a sudden drop of her voice to a hasty whisper, "have you got such a thing as a hair-pin to spare?"

Mary May was also a fortune-teller. Previous to her conviction, she had done a little business with credulous servant-maids and village girls, by foretelling the future; and she was anxious to practise her art on the matrons, on terms very much reduced.

A hair-pin, a scrap of tallow candle for her hair—any little privilege that might be conceded without harm to the officer, and with advantage to herself.

"My pretty lady, let me tell your fortune this morning," she would say, with the true professional whine—"there's such a fortune waiting for you! Ah! and a young man with dark eyes, too!—I dreamt of him last night, miss."

But fortune-telling did not answer: the matron's fortune was in locking and unlocking, keeping a strict watch on her prisoners, and rising one pound five a-year—Mary May's news of a young man with dark eyes was not a very great temptation.

I believe she told the fortunes of one or two of the prisoners who found themselves in association with her; but they were fortunes unsatisfactory to her auditors, for mutterings invariably ensued—occasionally a downright quarrel.

"I can't help it, miss," May would say when remonstrated with; "there's no agreeing with such rubbitch."

"You'll lose your badge, and go back to the old prison, I fear."

"I'm sorry for that, because you've been so very kind to me, and your handsome face has been like sunshine to me. Don't let the report be too stiff, miss, for your own Mary May's sake."

Mary May would be sometimes subject to fits of intense gloom after the priest's visit; and before his arrival, even, she would go through

strange self-imposed penances, that had to be reproved by the matrons in attendance, and now and then reported.

If she had been more than usually wicked in her own estimation, she would scratch her face in a horrible way, to conciliate the priest on his arrival—facial disfigurement being, in her idea, an excellent set-off against moral iniquity.

"It serves me right, miss," she said once, "I deserve it all. Don't try to persuade me not to do it."

But these morbid fits were few and far between, and Mary May, as a rule, was a troublesome, coarsely flattering, vexatious woman.

The last character to which I shall direct attention in this chapter was a Jewess, whom I shall call Solomons: a woman of education, and even refinement, who served a long term of penal servitude for receiving stolen goods, in a wholesale and business-like manner.

She was the Jewess, already mentioned in this book as being for a time in association with Alice Grey, and holding with her

lengthy arguments. Solomons was a quiet, thoughtful woman, with a horror of the other prisoners—a broad-faced Jewess, on whom the shame of incarceration seemed to tell somewhat.

Grave and reserved in her habits, yet civil and almost deferential to her matrons, she was a woman who made little complaint, and who, at first, was particular as to her food, and had the Hebrew objection to the Christian mode of cooking. In all Government prisons the religious feelings and the peculiarities of sect are studied, and efforts were made to soften a little the position in which Solomons was placed. A separate and special cooking was attempted for a little while, but interfered so much with official duties that it gradually fell into disuse; and as time went on, she appeared to conform more readily to the general rules respecting diet. She kept her fast-days, fish-days, etc., strictly to the last; and the officers not only threw no impediment in her way, but very kindly did their best to assist her.

Solomons's rich friends afforded a strange

contrast to prison visitors in general. These hooknosed Hebrew visitors were rather vain of their finery, it may be added, and anxious to make the most of it in the eyes of the officials. Solomons's husband, or Solomons's brother —the exact relationship I have forgotten—came on "visiting days" with unerring punctuality, dressed in the height of fashion, and with his fat sausage fingers glittering with diamond rings, and Solomons's lady friends in their silks and satins of gorgeous hues, made our poor brown merino dresses look wofully shabby by contrast. Dressing in colours suitable to the place never suggested itself to these Hebrews; but then they fry fish in sky-blue satin, a satirical writer has observed.

Solomons, when uneasy in her mind, was favoured by a special visit from the Rabbi, who went through the Jewish ceremonial expressly for her instruction and improvement. She was of a conciliatory disposition, I may add, and anxious to impress, by her past importance, the mind of the matron who had charge of her. There went a flying rumour through the prison that she had once been

liberal with some gold, although it was difficult to guess how gold had found its way into her hands, and unfair to intimate a doubt that any matron was an instrument between the Jewess and her friends. The rumour only arose from a half-sovereign being found in the ward near Solomons's cell, or in the airing-ground near Solomons herself. But rumours will steal into prisons, and cast their shadows over matrons who are stanch servants of the State. Such rumours an exemplary life is sure to live down in good time.

CHAPTER VII.

PRISONERS' FANCIES.

Of prisoners' vagaries, of the tricks that lead them into trouble, of the desperate acts that stamp them penal class women, and keep them at Millbank—of the insidious self-sacrifice, in the hope of reaching the infirmary, I have discoursed already at some length. In the present chapter I design to treat of the fairer side to prison life and character—to attempt the more pleasant task of proving that there are flashes of a better nature in many women serving out

their time; and that amongst a few there are little whims, fancies, tastes, that tell very plainly of a thoughtful mind and an affectionate disposition.

Not that all prisoners' fancies are indications of a better nature; some fancies ostensibly have no meaning, and are attempted by way of solace, or for that variation of employment which *is* a solace to not a few female convicts. Of this class I may as well speak in the first place.

Both at Millbank and Brixton there are a number of well-behaved, orderly women, who are conscious that smashing windows and destroying prison property are not the best methods of advancing in the good graces of the authorities; women who have self-command sufficient to resign themselves to the monotony of their lives, and do their work, and fulfil all prison duties with regularity and neatness. By way of a relief, they have their little fancies to indulge in—harmless in themselves, and involving at the worst but the reservation of a few threads of divers colours, or little pieces of stuff from their general work, for uses of

their own, to be presently explained—or else some vagaries with reference to their own ideas of cooking, also to be mentioned here.

The principal amusement of the good conduct women appears to be the making of innumerable tiny shoes and boots, constructed with exceeding neatness, and from a quantity of material the diversity of which is a puzzle to the officers. From innumerable bits of rag, of all shapes and colours, are these boots made; by the more skilful women constructed with a grace of outline that renders them worth preserving as specimens of prison skill. These little boots and shoes—generally lace-up ladies' boots—are carefully padded, closed at the top, and sewed together in pairs; they are seldom more than an inch or an inch and a-half in length, and are thus handy for concealment. They are often offered as little presents from the prisoner to the matron; if they are seen in the cell, a matron of judgment will not provoke the woman by making an immediate seizure of them, although the rule of forfeiture is absolute. The prisoner, however, is generally ready with some appeal:—

"Oh, give me these, Jones!—I should like

to give these to my little niece"—or sister. And Jones brightens up with delight at once, and, happy in having the power to confer a favour, is radiant with pleasure for a week together.

The construction of small rag dolls is another source of amusement that is against the rules, but in which the women will employ themselves during the over-time after tea. In the making of these dolls they are not quite so skilful; materials being limited, and their knowledge of anatomy—even the anatomy of dolls — being imperfect to the last degree. These little dolls have extraordinarily small waists and long crane-like necks; and the outline of their features is stitched in coloured thread on the white nob that represents the head. Sometimes the dolls are strictly prison dolls, with the regulation dress, apron and cap complete, and are representatives or caricatures of "pals" in other wings. If a scrap of silk can be filched from the dress-making women, a lady is attempted; now and then it is a servant, standing on a flat bit

of card, with a broom in her hand — the handle a splinter of the table perhaps, and the bristles abstracted from the cell broom. If the doll be intended as a present, great care is taken with the capillary decorations, and from the worker's own head will be shorn sufficient hair to give effect to the *tout ensemble*. But they are ugly specimens of art at the best, and the immense mouth that is marked in red cotton, under the long black line significant of the nose, gives a gaol-bird look to the whole of them which a disinterested observer is more quick to perceive than those who have been working under difficulties, and in fear of detection, for a week at least.

I remember one woman with a taste for juggling making a series of small balls from "ravellings" of her work, and practising in her cell the art of flinging these balls from one hand to the other, with a success at which any professional mountebank might have gnashed his teeth with envy.

Crochet is often practised, *sub rosâ*, by the prisoners. A woman will begin slowly to accumulate a store of prison cotton for the purpose, concealing it in the interior of her bed, perhaps, until time allows her an opportunity of commencing—or else beginning at once, and concealing her work each day. (Despite the cell being searched once a-week, the woman will often contrive to evade detection of her hidden store.) A crochet-hook is formed out of a needle or hair-pin, and a prisoner skilful in the art will turn out a neat and perfect specimen of work. If she be attached to her matron, which is very often the case, the woman will suddenly thrust it into her hands when completed.

"What's this for?" is the exclamation.

"It's for you," is the gruff response.

"But I must not take it—it's against the rules."

"Burn it, then."

"But this is prison cotton—I ought to report you."

"Do, if you like," mutters the woman.

It is not reported in nine cases out of ten —the anti-macassar or the D'Oyley is quietly destroyed, and the case, with all its extenuating circumstances, communicated to the principal matron, or consigned to oblivion, as judgment may dictate.

And a few of these prisoners' efforts to evince their affection to the matron in charge are very embarrassing to the officer. It is very hard to report a woman for working weeks or months to make some little present on the officer's birthday—the date of which she has managed artfully to elicit—but it is a dangerous secret for the matron to keep, and may peril her position. And these women are not to be trusted, notwithstanding all their manifestations of affection; in the event of a break-out, they will seek to bring the officer into trouble even respecting the presents received from themselves; a little cloud, no bigger than the hand, will turn most of them into enemies, who will vow war to the death, should the chance be offered them.

Some matrons, new to the service, are foolish enough to receive these little offerings, and generally live to repent the unwise act. Still there are prisoners who are very faithful, who never swerve from their first fancy, and who would almost die to serve their officer—they are exceptions to the general rule.

Pincushions of a diminutive form and odd ingenious shapes, women will make also; there is no motive for their construction; it is hard to find a recipient for them—they are readily discovered in a cell, and they entail much extra work; yet they continue to be made with as much zeal as if an extra gratuity depended upon the rapidity with which they were finished off.

One woman at Brixton Prison constructed a fancy box from some old cards, fastened them neatly together, and embroidered every side with texts from Scripture in red and blue letters. This, as a model of prison skill under difficulties, I have reason to believe was not destroyed.

In the airing ground at Brixton, where

there are a few flowers growing at times—flowers of a perennial kind, such as white alysson and Michaelmas daisies—one of them will be suddenly snatched and hidden. This is an offence for which the woman is reproved, if not reported, in the event of discovery; and as the prisoners will occasionally quarrel for possession of the flower before the time of exercise is over, discovery generally ensues.

I have a remembrance of looking through the "inspection" of a cell some years ago, and perceiving a prisoner, with her elbows on the table, staring at a common daisy, which she had plucked from the central patch of grass during her rounds—one of those rude, repulsive, yet not wholly bad prisoners, from whom no display of sentiment was anticipated. Yet the wistful look of that woman at her stolen prize was a gleam of as true sentiment as ever breathed in a poet's lines. A painter might have made much of her position, and a philosopher might have moralized concerning it—for the woman wept at last, dropped her head down on the table be-

tween her linked hands, and shed her bitter tears silently and noiselessly. The prison daisy must have spoken of the old, innocent times—of the fields she crossed once with old friends—perhaps of daisies like unto that before her, which were growing on a mother's grave.

Six months afterwards I saw that flower pressed between the leaves of her Bible—a little treasure I should not have had the heart to take away, had there been any laws of confiscation concerning daisies in "the books."

Prisoners with unpoetical fancies, or unindustrious fancies, have peculiar whims concerning their food, and ideas for cooking such food in an original and felonious manner. These are the dainty prisoners, to whom the regular order of diet is not congenial, and who risk their badges in cooking for themselves.

A woman, for instance, will be seized with a fancy to make a cake, and proceed in the following manner. She will conceal her dinner loaf, and after dinner soak her bread in the water which is furnished three times a

day to each cell. The bread, moistened sufficiently, is mixed with the fat which has been previously skimmed from her dinner; the whole is kneaded into some semblance of a cake, placed in a can or "a pint," and, when the gas is lighted, held over the flame until the baking is completed. When cans and "pints" are not to be had, a woman will hold the cake in her fingers over the gas, changing it from one hand to another, and blowing and licking her fingers when the suffering becomes too intense. Finally, if the cake be baked to the satisfaction of the composer, and with no discovery on the part of the officer of the ward, it is consumed in secret, a portion perhaps being reserved for transmission to the distant pal, by the readiest means that may be available in the morning.

As a rule, however, discovery takes place—for the perfume of burnt cake, and of the scorched bottom of "pints," will be wafted into the ward, and give rise to suspicion. If the matron's feet be heard rapidly advancing, the half-baked cake is concealed, and the coolest denial to

the matron's doubts is given on the instant.

"Pints" have been altered more than once on account of the surreptitious bakings of bread or meat saved from the dinner. Pewter was found to melt readily over a gas flame, and tin cans were substituted, the bottoms of which became unsoldered and dropped out when they were next used, and so pewter again became in the ascendant.*

The punishment for melting dinner cans or "pints" is exceedingly heavy, and has tended to check in a great degree the practice; but now and then there still steals into the wards a peculiar aroma of overdone crust and melted pewter, symbolical of experimental cooking.

* Pewter, however, is confined to Brixton Prison. An ingenious male prisoner at Millbank contrived to melt his pewter pint into the shape of a key, and thereby placed that metal "under suspicion" again.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—FIGHT THE SECOND FOR A SOUL.

I AM indebted for part of this slight sketch of prison character to the late Miss Fanny Hucker, who resigned her situation as matron of Brixton Prison for the matron's post at the Prisoners' Aid Society. At the latter establishment she died, a very young woman, worn out with toil and anxiety for the reformation of her fallen sisterhood.

Miss Hucker was an able matron at Brixton Prison, and proved herself a clever superintendent of the female branch of the Prisoners' Aid, for

the little time that it pleased God to allow her to fulfil her duties there. A thoughtful, pious, intensely earnest woman, with her soul in the good work that lay before her; a favourite with the prisoners at Brixton; a kind friend to the discharged prisoners who afterwards placed themselves beneath her guidance; ever a good officer and a Christian.

Miss Hucker, from her change of duties, had great advantages in observing the woman, whom, for certain reasons, I will call Graham, both in her prison life and in the life beyond it. Miss Hucker obtained her appointment at the Prisoners' Aid almost at the same time as Graham obtained her licence, or ticket-of-leave, and passed from her cell to the house at Pimlico provided as a refuge for those women anxious to do well.

Very simply, but very touchingly, Miss Hucker related to me, only a little while before her death, the history of Graham, a woman I had known and been interested in during her sojourn at Millbank and Brixton Prisons. Graham was a Scotchwoman, and a native, I believe, of Edinburgh. When a very young woman, according to her own story,

which there is no reason for doubting, she was led away by a female friend, less scrupulous than herself, to visit a low dancing-room, and by degrees to imbibe a taste for dancing and low society. She became a source of anxiety to her friends, made disreputable acquaintances, grew callous to remonstrance, went wrong, and ran away from home to the cruel, soul-destroying streets. Here she went from bad to worse, until she became mixed up in a quarrel at an infamous house, resulting in the robbery and almost murder of a victim who had been inveigled there. She was sentenced to twenty-one years' transportation, her accomplice—the same woman who had led her away in the first instance—suffering also a similar sentence. Graham has always maintained that it was this woman who struck the man on the head from behind; that the project was altogether hers, that she had no share in it, and that the result was a surprise and horror to her. How far that may be true, or whether there be any modicum of truth in that part of her assertion, I have no means of ascertaining. It is so old a story, this innocence of all intention to commit the last deed that locks them up for ten,

fifteen, twenty years, or life, that prison matrons will grow sceptical.

Graham in due course arrived at Millbank Prison, a young woman, fretful, capricious, and prone to much excitement. Her behaviour at Millbank was not of a first-class order; she obtained many reports for disorderly conduct, broke out as frequently as other women, and gained the sad repute of being dangerous and untrustworthy. Still she was not the worst of prisoners; there were evident signs of turning to the better side, and at uncertain intervals she would evince a good temper, and an anxiety to please, that kept her out of the list of women utterly incorrigible. She was one of the early transfers to Brixton Prison, when it was opened as a female convict establishment, under the superintendence of Mrs. Martin—still the painstaking, energetic superintendent of that Surrey prison, I am happy to assert.

In Graham's transfers from Glasgow to Millbank, and from Millbank to Brixton, the accomplice in her crime followed side by side; and it is worth recording, in the annals of human inconsistency, that these

two women, who in the world together had been the stanchest friends, the most inseparable companions, were the bitterest and most implacable enemies during the eight and a half years which they served before a license of departure was granted by the Secretary of State. The one looked upon the other as the cause of all the trouble that had brought her into her present position, and cursed her for a false and wicked woman, without whose evil counsel the light of freedom might have been indulged in to that day. Silent and sullen they passed each other in their walks, the remembrance of their last criminal act ever a shadow between them.

Graham at Brixton Prison was a different woman from Graham at Millbank. The slight liberties allowed there seemed an incentive to exertion; and she worked upwards for her badges, became a civil and orderly prisoner, grateful for a kind word from the matrons, and evincing for her own particular officers respect, and even affection. Years before her liberty was granted she was a Number One woman, earning her shilling a week, handy in the officers' rooms, cleaning wards,

and acting in the infirmary—always better able to agree with her officers than with her fellow-prisoners. Now and then, when acting in the laundry with the prisoners, Graham would be put out of temper, and nearly risk the loss of her badge; and as she was always a well-conducted woman if not exposed to any undue irritation, it was found expedient to keep her more from the general body.

It seems a strange point to dwell upon in the case of a prisoner convicted of robbery with violence, but it may be said here that Graham was strictly *honest*. Acts of pilfering, in any way or shape —and the infirmary offers a chance or two of the kind—Graham was above. In attending to her officer's bed-room, a pile of untold money might have been left in any part of the room, without this woman being tempted to touch a farthing. On one occasion when a matron was sick, and Graham and another prisoner had been accustomed to go in and out of her room, some little trinket belonging to the patient was missing, and Graham's suppressed excitement at the loss showed how she feared that suspicion of

the abstraction might fasten upon her. She had her doubts of the other woman, a half-witted creature, very nimble with her fingers, and very much attached to herself; and she called her aside, and vowed eternal vengeance on her, and a course of torture, to which tearing her piecemeal should be heaven in comparison, if she didn't restore the trinket to its place. In half an hour after this conference, and when the matron was making up her mind to the loss, and not report her own sin of omission in leaving temptation in the way of the prisoners, the woman entered, made a feint of picking up the trinket, and, with a silly air, saying,—

"Is this what you was a-talking about, on the floor here?" she laid it on the dressing-table, and skulked off.

Graham, during the last year of her stay, I believe, was wholly employed in the infirmary —a valuable prison servant, who could be trusted with anything. About this time another matron fell ill—seriously and dangerously ill—and was removed from her own room to a

special one adjoining the infirmary, and out of the way and bustle of the prison itself. To this matron Graham had long since evinced an attachment, and it became her duty, in a great degree, to wait upon her and her sister, who, I believe, was kindly allowed by the Directors to act, under the special circumstances, as her nurse. I should have liked, in this place, to testify to the great forethought and general good feeling of this matron; but, as she may be still in the service, and as, from my past knowledge of her character, I feel assured I should be giving her pain by the introduction of her name into this work, I can but simply testify to the merits of one whose duties, though lying apart from my own, did not hinder me from considering her, in our old Brixton prison-days together, a friend and a sister.

Graham waited on the sick matron for a few weeks, never demurring to the extra trouble incurred by the invalid's long stay; and that any little trouble which is new and additional will throw a woman into a paroxysm of rage, the

reader is sufficiently acquainted with prison character to be aware.

"Don't ye think now, lassie, that if ye could try that jelly, or that beef-tea, ye'd feel the better for it?" Graham was asking at every hour of the day.

She not only never demurred to trouble, but took a pride in her task and in her position; and when the matron was strong enough to bear it, she and her kind attendant had many bits of gossip about the liberty-days, when the latter should be free. Graham had a "pal" in the prison, a pretty young woman, whose character was exceedingly doubtful, and whose time for leaving was within a few weeks of her own—and there were many conversations between the matron and Graham concerning this woman, whom I may designate Francis.

Graham and Francis had been stanch friends in prison, and might become more stanch ones out of it; and the matron feared that the few good steps made by the former might be rendered nugatory by the evil example that it was

feared the prisoner Francis was only too eager to afford.

"Don't have anything to say to Francis when you have obtained your liberty, Graham'" said this matron once; "I am afraid she will do you no good, if you take her as companion."

"Dinna fear," was the answer; "I'll go straight to the Prisoners' Aid, that they've been talking about, and get a place as servant somewhere. Francis is a lassie all very well in this place, but not out o' it. Can't ye trust me, miss, when I say so?"

The matron was well connected, and Graham used to drop many hints of the happiness of her future life, if she could obtain a cook or housemaid's place in the service of some one who could trust her.

Time passed on; the matron became strong enough to be removed into the country; Graham received her liberty, and went straight to the Prisoners' Aid, that refuge from a sinful world, which the pleasant face of Miss Hucker made more of a home to her. The *finale* to this story, as already stated, I learned from that lady, whose

position afforded her the opportunity of becoming acquainted with it.

Graham had not been, I believe, more than a week at the Prisoners' Aid when a married sister of the sick officer arrived, to offer her a place in her household. As related to me, the effect of this offer on the woman was very touching; her hands dropped to her side, her face turned deathly white, then became suffused with crimson, and her excited feelings at last found relief in a passionate outburst of tears.

"Dinna say more yet, lady; it's too good to be true, surely!"

It was some time before Graham could find courage to hear the particulars of the situation proffered; of the salary that was to be given; of the efforts that would be made—remembering what a kind and faithful nurse she had been— to make her position a happy one, and to keep inviolate the secret of her past misspent life.

Graham brightened up before the interview was over, and accepted, with a thousand thanks and blessings, the situation that had been offered her.

"I shall see Miss ——— again, too," she exclaimed; "why, I shall make a raal hame o' ye'er house, my bonny lady. Ye are treating me too kindly, and I dinna deserve it *yet*."

The woman was all gratitude, and I believe, despite the sad sequel to this story—despite after appearances, which cast a shadowy suspicion on her—repaired to this situation with a resolution to do well, and to strive to deserve the confidence placed in her.

And all honour to those who have the courage to place that confidence, for they are the real and best supporters of such establishments as that which Graham quitted. If there are instances where such confidence is misplaced, and the trust abused, there are instances more frequent still of men and women being won back to the right path, and the honest life from which they fell. It requires no small amount of moral courage to place in one's house a woman whose antecedents are repellent, who makes little profession of amendment, or perhaps too much, and so suggests doubts as to her sincerity; and those who possess

that courage, and have that fellow-sympathy with God's unfortunates, command our high esteem.

The experiment was tried with Graham, and she took her allotted post, and became a faithful, honest servant, whose exertions were unremitting to do her duty and prove herself a useful subordinate. Her affection for those who encouraged her by their kind, cheering words was demonstrative, but it was genuine; and her love for some little children in the house made her a great favourite with them, and won all their hearts towards her.

She was truly happy for a time; implicit confidence was placed in her; there was no shadow of the prison life to darken her rejoicing until a certain day when a letter came by post for her, and she was found crying in her room a short while afterwards.

The true contents of that letter were never divulged; Graham alleged that it was a missive from a sister in Edinburgh, with the news of her little niece's death, and no effort was made to intrude upon her confidence by any inquisitive

examination. The news was accepted as truth; she was condoled with on the loss of her niece; she resumed her work in as fair a manner, but never again with the same spirit, as before. She was still faithful in her service, still interested in the children, but there was evidently a change. She became thoughtful, and would be found standing in her room absorbed in her own reveries—weighing, perhaps, the chances for good against the temptation to evil, and striking the balance between them.

The temptation was too strong! She became restless and unsettled—anxious to see her old officer, Miss Hucker, she said, and obtained, more than once, leave of absence for that purpose. At last she was found missing one morning, and a letter was discovered on the breakfast-table of her mistress.

A very strange, passionate epistle it was—that was read by her employer, and afterwards transmitted to Miss Hucker—begging pardon, a thousand pardons, for going away, but alleging her inability to remain, and the impossibility of living such a quiet life! There were some

rambling incoherencies about going to Brixton Prison to see the doctor concerning her lungs, and of returning to Edinburgh to her sister, winding up again with an earnest "pardon me —but I must go!" and a prayer for every blessing to descend on the mistress, her sister, and her children, for all the kindness and faith exhibited to "their unfortunate servant,

"MARY GRAHAM."

Graham had made a hasty dash away, as if torn by the father of evil himself from the honest life she had been pursuing. Her work-box was left open on the drawers—her trunk of clothes unfastened in her room; the bed had been lain on, but only on the outside, on the preceding night. There was some housekeeping money, of which she had been left in charge the night before, to a fraction by the side of the note; and the plate had been carefully counted and put in its usual place, with honest regularity to the last. She left behind her the remembrance of a faithful servant for the time—"you will find all right, dear Mrs. ———"

she had added, almost proudly, by way of post-script to her letter.

Graham never re-appeared at her mistress's house. In the course of a few days she sent a messenger with a brief note, requesting that her boxes might be delivered; and from the answers given to a few inquiries made of that messenger it was evident that there was an intention to conceal all true details of the present life of Mary Graham. Like a dark shadow in a dream, she passed away, a sad instance of the devil gaining the mastery, that is painful to record. Some months afterwards she was seen, by an officer of our prisons, wandering about the Haymarket with Francis, and both hastened down a street upon being recognized. Miss Hucker has since died, and Graham, at least, has not had her licence revoked, and been sent to Brixton to work out the full term of her dreadful sentence. To Francis, and to Francis alone, I think, must be attributed this last deviation from the good way. There is very little doubt that it was Francis's letter that unsettled the feeble mind of Graham.

By a few it is considered that it was a carefully elaborated scheme to meet together from the first —that it had been arranged beforehand, and that not a step laid down was varied from. This surmise must of necessity be false in some respects—it is, I believe, altogether false.

That Graham intended reformation when she left the Prisoners' Aid for service; that it was a hard struggle, at last, between the good and evil angels for the mastery, I am as fully convinced as I am that the result was disheartening and sorrowful.

And in a world where sin and sorrow must, by the laws that govern them, exert their influence at times, such results here and there will infallibly occur, and will dishearten Christian efforts.

For a wisely hidden purpose, it seems as if there were some natures so utterly unstable, that they are without courage to resist temptation, and their power to work evil is as the strength of a giant. In the late mystic work of a great author, we are told of a wand possessing the power to draw towards it from a long distance,

and however unwilling, the person indicated by the will of him who sets the magic in motion. It is spoken of as a power in the mystic world to draw the victim towards evil, as the loadstone attracts steel to itself. We can smile at the exaggeration, and criticize keenly a story that depends upon such machinery for its working; but the power to lure from right unto wrong, to turn the wanderer from the right path, with God's prayers on the lip, seems equally as unaccountable, and is more awfully true. One can almost imagine the tempter turning such a wand to the breast of the tempted, and luring him away from the fold by a means and a spell that in the bitter moments of remorse are scarce understood.

God be thanked for the greater power that can shiver with its lightning the influence which distracts, and can in its own time bring back the new heart, with the old faith in things holy!

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRISON LIBRARY.

A SHORT chapter on the small libraries attached to each government prison may help to make these volumes more complete, with reference to prison matters. The collection at each establishment is not large, or extensively varied—being, more or less, a collection of duplicate copies.

To the libraries at Millbank and Brixton, a female librarian is attached, who is responsible for the care of the volumes, keeps a register

of the women who have books in their possession, and of the titles of those books—visits the cells to collect and change them, and, if required, to recommend any particular volume. Every volume is stamped "Millbank," or "Brixton Prison," on the fly-leaf and at the end, much in the same way as "Museum Britannicum" is marked on the books in our National Library.

These books, on their return, are very carefully examined by the librarian, to make sure that leaves have not been extracted; for wherever a blank space occurs at the end of a chapter, temptation is offered to the prisoners to add to their stock of paper, for sly notes to distant "palls."

Instances of such appropriation unfortunately occur with some frequency, and are severely punished when discovered. The notorious Ball, of whom mention has been made several times during the progress of these chronicles, on being once searched, was found to have no fewer than twenty-one engravings, carefully folded in her pocket, for the future decoration of her cell. And the coolness with which

the frontispiece from a work is extracted, passed on to some woman, and finally stuck against the wall of her cell, is only to be equalled by the feigned ignorance of any rules by the breach of which guilt can have been incurred.

"I didn't know it was from a prison book, miss. Jones passed it on to me, and I stuck it up there to make the place look decent like. It's very odd," suddenly taking up the aggrieved side of the question, "that I can't have a bit of a picture without being found fault with. You're allus a-pitching on me."

The selection of these prison books is left to the chaplain, and the religious element naturally predominates. Some of the women object to this, and one prisoner, on being asked if she would like a book, replied scornfully—

"Not one of *your* books. They are always driving religion at one. Haven't I got religion enough there to worry me?" pointing to her prison Bible.

In the Brixton library there is more diver-

sity of matter, and the books are chosen with some idea of interesting the prisoners. The chaplain, in a liberal spirit, has not wholly excluded fiction from the shelves, and several copies of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Wide, Wide World," and the "Lamp-lighter," are provided for the use of the women, by whom they are greatly esteemed.

The books in circulation are chiefly histories of Rome, Greece, and England; "Leisure Hour," "Sunday at Home," "Layard's Nineveh," "Naomi, or the Martyrs of Carthage," "Rise and Fall of the Eastern Empire," "Paley's Evidences of Christianity," &c., &c., &c.

One woman devoted her leisure time entirely to the study of history, and considered it as an affront to be offered works of a different description; and another read and re-read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," till she must have known by heart every incident of that famous work. She was partial to telling the story to those women who were unable to read; and she would relate with such animation the villanies and atrocities of Legree, that

considerable virtuous indignation would be aroused in the breasts of her listeners.

"What an awful wretch that man must have been!" was the remark made on that personage, by a woman suffering a long sentence for the cold-blooded murder of her child.

About once a fortnight the librarian visits each cell to collect the books, and see that they have not met with any ill-treatment. On such occasions various explanations will be offered by the doubtful characters for a missing leaf or cover.

"It was all done before—indeed it was!" is the general remark; "I spoke of it when you brought the book, miss."

Some women are strangely ignorant of the contents of the library, and ask for works not likely to be in it, such as "Jack the Giant Killer," or the "Newgate Calendar;" others want something with pictures, the literary merits of the work being of no consideration; some may have turned morose during the fortnight, and will read no more—they haven't got time—or, they hate reading!

Amongst the "breaking out women" the prison books suffer with the rest of the articles in their cells at the time, and new copies are constantly being added to the library.

These prison libraries stand as evidence of the consideration of the authorities for the prisoners; and of the efforts made in every direction, by kind-hearted, thoughtful men, to relieve the tedium of confinement.

CHAPTER X.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—ELIZA TRENT.

I HAVE made some little alteration in the name of this particular prisoner. Eliza Trent is in the world again, and there is no probability of her return to prison.

At Millbank and Brixton Prisons Eliza Trent served several years penal servitude. She was a delicate, pale-faced, attenuated woman, of four or five and thirty years of age—a thread-paper kind of woman, whose probabilities of serving out her time seemed from appearances

extremely doubtful, but yet one who clung to life with a tenacity that carried her through many years of penal servitude, and left her free again.

Eliza Trent was one who might be termed a good prisoner; she was a woman who gave little trouble, and was cautious or crafty enough to present her best face to the chaplain and superintendent.

She was partial to long conferences with the chaplain—expressed, possibly actually felt, contrition for her past sins, and made to him many resolutions of amendment, which, let us hope, are being persevered with, now the world is open to her. She was a regular communicant, read her Bible in her leisure moments, and yet, despite all this, never suggested to her matrons that she was a penitent woman. That she was a favourite of the chaplain, who had his hopes concerning her, who reasoned with her, and prayed with her, it is but fair to say here—although chaplains, in their earnestness and simple-mindedness, are often imposed on by a show of seeming reverence.

Eliza Trent was a good dressmaker, and when her better state of health would allow her to leave the infirmary, was accustomed to make the dresses of the superintendent or officers with extraordinary skill and taste. The peculiar trait of character which has led me to give Trent a place in my hastily-sketched portrait-gallery, was her independent spirit—a spirit that led her into trouble, and showed itself in a hundred different ways. Conscious of being a good dressmaker, and therefore sought out by prison matrons who wished a "best dress" made up, she was eccentric in her acceptance of work, and would only labour for those officers who were favourites with her, or at those dresses which took her fancy.

"I very much object to common dresses," she would say sometimes; "it is exceedingly annoying to be troubled with bad material. When you have a nice silk—I'll think about it."

And she was not to be persuaded to alter her determination, if she had taken a dislike to the nature of the fabric proffered her. To the matrons who were favourites she unbended more; would make their uniforms, and be very particular con-

cerning the fit, but her principal pride was to work for the heads of the establishment, and to be entrusted with a costly fabric.

That characteristic independence of which mention has been made, led her at one time suddenly to cease dressmaking altogether, and that at a period when there were very few needlewomen in the prison, and work was plentiful. Eightpence a-week had been the sum allowed to dressmakers before her time, and Trent struck for a rise in wages to one shilling, to be placed on a par with labour women, who received the latter amount *per diem*. The remainder of the dressmakers followed her example, and asked for shirts and other work requiring less skill, and yet paid for at the same price.

Trent was certainly in the right, and consequently had the best of the argument. She was a good needlewoman, and if anyone was anxious to have her dress finished by a certain day, would rise at four in the morning in the summer months to prevent a disappointment; she therefore considered that the dressmakers were entitled to the highest gratuity allowed.

And Trent gained the day, and the shilling was awarded, much to the gratification of the prison dressmakers—an instance of a successful strike under difficulties worthy the notice of all discontented operatives. She was somewhat of a mischief-maker, too, with her fellow-prisoners; was partial to listening to their complaints, and to the relation of their mutual jealousies, after which she would exaggerate matters to the "pal" who had been the subject of remark, and so bring round a quarrel, or a fight, or a break-out, as the case might be.

"Lor', I shouldn't have thought she'd have gone on so about a trifle, poor creature!" Trent would say, upon hearing the news; "I did it with the best of motives."

But whether with the best or worst of motives, she was partial to playing the peace-maker, or general umpire in matters of dispute, in most cases rendering affairs a trifle more foggy and confused in consequence of her interference.

"She's a two-faced un," I heard a prisoner remark; "if I catch her making mischief about me, I'll shake the bony skeleton to pieces, if I have one-and-twenty days 'dark' for it."

Other prisoners were jealous of her dress-making qualifications, and were not sparing in their criticisms.

"It's only because she can make a good fit that she gets the upper hand, and is always being made so much of," was the constant comment.

Trent had her tempers sometimes. At Brixton, if I recollect aright, she fell into disgrace for striking her officer, an act for which she expressed afterwards her unfeigned contrition.

She is famous in prison records for her final exhibition of spirit. On being informed that her gratuity amounted to a sum in excess of seven pounds, she expressed her dissatisfaction at the amount, and refused to take a penny of the first instalment.

"I'll make the prison a present of it," she said indignantly; "I have been underpaid and unfairly treated, and I won't take a penny!"

And she continued firm, and declined all gratuity, on any pretence whatever. Great efforts were made to induce her to *borrow* a sovereign, previous to her departure—which sovereign, I believe, was finally slipped into the bundle contain-

ing that second suit of underclothes with which prisoners are provided on obtaining their liberty.

But so much dissatisfaction was expressed by Trent, that it was supposed she would exhibit some display of temper at the railway station; and, in this instance, a male officer accompanied the matron in charge of her to the station. She was white with passion the whole of the way, and continued to dilate on the enormity of Government proceedings in cutting short her salary, and to resist all attempts of the matron to prove that the account must have been necessarily exact, to the farthing.

"Well, it's no good telling me that," she exclaimed, "for I'm never going to believe it. If I am not to be paid a fair amount for my work, Captain O'Brien may keep it all, and welcome."

When ensconced in the railway carriage, Trent made a further exhibition of her independence, by placing her bundle on the lap of a prisoner opposite, whose liberty had fallen on the same day, and whose destination lay in the same direction.

"There's another suit of underclothes for you," she said, in a patronizing manner; "they'll be of more use to you than me."

The woman looked rather amazed at this generosity, which was checked by the matron, who placed the bundle back on Trent's lap.

"I must see you off, Trent, as the rules direct."

"I shall give them away when we have started, mind," she said, defiantly.

"I cannot help that."

And I have no doubt that Trent kept her word, and heaped her favours on her fellow-prisoner.

Her spirit cooled down, however, and she took a more sober view of things in the course of a few weeks.

She returned to her friends, and found voices enough in their midst to remonstrate with her on her folly, while her own experience soon taught her that a place in the world, with little capital to invest, was rather hard to maintain. She wrote, after a while, a very humble letter to the authorities, soliciting their help to place her in the Prisoners' Aid

Society, and begging that her gratuity might be forwarded to that establishment.

What the result was I have had no means of ascertaining, but I think we may all venture to guess that Trent was not kept to the strict letter of her first resolves.

CHAPTER XI.

MAD PRISONERS.

It is a difficult problem to solve, whether the close confinement and the wearisome monotony of life be the cause of the brain weakening, or whether remorse plays a greater part than we believe—or even whether the crime itself for which the woman suffers, be not a part and parcel of that madness, now less consistent with the cunning which made the deed resemble theft or murder.

In the case of Celestina Sommer, a mad prisoner already alluded to at length, it may live in the remembrance of my readers that

general dissatisfaction was evinced by the public at the commutation of her sentence of death to penal servitude for life. The public could not believe in anything but a cool, deliberate murder; there was great doubt as to the reason of her reprieve, and the press commented, with some harshness, on the alteration of sentence, both in her case and in that of Elizabeth Harris, lying under sentence of death at the same time.* Sommer, during her trial, had evinced great coolness and indifference to the details of the case as laid before the jury, and the signs of madness in her did not show themselves till after some period of her prison service.

It may be a satisfaction to those who wrote upon this theme to know that, had their expressions of dissent been listened to, a woman unaccountable for her actions would have been hanged, and the true impulses that urged her to the cruel and unnatural act would never have been known.

And in prison, with observant officers, surgeons, and physicians taking note of every sign of

* Elizabeth Harris, see chapter xx., volume ii., page 257.

mental weakness, or every pretence thereof, it is, and always will remain a matter of great difficulty to guess where sanity ends, and where madness is likely to begin. It is so common a trick to feign madness, for the purpose of association, that many really mad are regarded with suspicion, and not sent too readily to Fisherton.

The prisoner Copes, as already remarked, required the addition of Dr. Forbes Winslow to the prison staff before the truth could be ascertained concerning her sanitary condition; and it is still a matter of doubt amongst the matrons whether the verdict, after all, was a correct one. It is natural enough to be sceptical of any violent exhibitions of rage—the occurrence is so frequent, and the temptation to destroy besets so many of the ignorant class of prisoners.

Still madness steals in amongst these women, and going to Fisherton is a matron's extra duty that is constantly occurring. I am of opinion—and perhaps alone in my opinion—that the doubts of a woman's insanity are carried too far in our Government prisons,

and that, a long while before the surgeon or physician is convinced, a woman may be a living, breathing danger to her officers, whose lives, and particularly that of the one in charge of her, hang, as it were, by a hair. It is this reluctance to pronounce a woman insane—perhaps to risk a medical reputation by too hasty a verdict—that leads occasionally to horrible scenes in our prisons, and I cannot too strongly urge upon the directors to inquire more closely into this matter. It is at least due to the officers to have a ward, or a portion of a ward, specially devoted to doubtful cases, over which a different management or a different restraint should be exercised. Women suspected to be mad by medical authorities, and *known* to be mad by prison matrons, are treated like the rest of the prisoners if their conduct be not too glaringly outrageous; they mix with other women, are loose in the airing ground at the same time, and have opportunities to indulge in all that mischief which the cunning of madness so readily suggests.

In one instance the life of a valuable

officer at Brixton Prison nearly fell a sacrifice to this grave sin of omission. A woman of that doubtful class to which I have just alluded conceived the horrible thought of murdering her matron, and so far succeeded in her attempt as to deprive the prison of that officer's services for a long period of time.

This woman, whose name was Kearns, had taken a hatred to her officer for a fancied slight in giving her a cap and dress of a different quality from that of the other women—a delusion which, allied with other eccentricities, should have placed her in a separate cell in the "old prison" at once. Kearns, by some means or other never clearly ascertained, obtained possession af a knife, which she secreted in her cell for some days, harbouring all the time her horrible idea of murder, with that persistency which is a singular trait with mad people in general. Early one morning, being a "wing woman," and so not strictly confined to her cell, she begged very humbly the matron's company for a few minutes; she had found such a beautiful verse in her Bible, she said,

if the officer would only kindly read it to her. Suspecting no treachery, and anxious, as the best matrons ever are, to offer those little attentions and kindnesses which win upon a prisoner, the officer accompanied Kearns into her cell, and took the open Bible from the hands of the woman. "You'll see better near the light," was the insidious remark; and the matron approached nearer the prison window at the suggestion of the mad-woman. The door was shut to on the instant, and, with a wild-beast's spring, Kearns was on the matron, who, taken off her guard, fell to the ground with the prisoner above her, stabbing at her face and throat with a knife. Then ensued a struggle for life such as had never been known in our female convict prisons; the desperate fury and determination of the prisoner, the fierce struggle of the wounded officer. It happened that the women I have already mentioned by the names of Graham and Francis, in the eighth chapter of this volume, were in the wing, and were the first to notice that Kearns's door was closed,

and the matron missing. There was a cry for the principal when the scuffling was heard inside Kearns's cell, and the key being turned by that officer, Francis, followed by Graham and the matron, dashed in to the rescue. Francis was the first to seize Kearns and wrest the knife away, and a year of her sentence was afterwards remitted from her term by the directors in consequence. The matron, seriously wounded in the face and neck, and also in the hands, while using them for her protection, was borne to her room, and the woman was placed under rigid surveillance, and immediately afterwards sent to Fisherton.

The matron lay for many weeks in danger, and for a long period after convalescence it was doubtful whether her nerves would ever be sufficiently strong to allow of a resumption of her duties. I am glad to be able to record that these doubts were gradually dispelled, and that this officer is still in service at Brixton Prison.

Mad prisoners are generally put in associa-

tion, and the effect on the minds of the women who have charge of them is peculiar. Great judgment respecting this association should be exercised, for much depends upon the character and nerve of the woman placed in charge. The selection is made somewhat indiscriminately, and the nurse, or watcher, is often a callous woman, or one of a stupid, inane, character, with no tact or judgment. I remember one woman, who was so long in association with a half-witted prisoner, that she became almost half-witted herself; she had amused herself so frequently by a careful imitation of the antics, gestures, and facial distortions of her companion, that she began to indulge in the same vagaries when her services as nurse were considered no longer requisite.

As a rule, the sane prisoners are proud of being chosen as custodians of the insane, although the latter are naturally capricious and difficult to please. It is pitiful to see the woman whose mind is deserting her, brightening up at the prospect of a companion who

will make her rag dolls, or a pair of boots, to amuse her. And some of these weak minds, in their second childhood, will nurse and play with their dolls with all a child's deep interest.

There are more women really and radically insane in our prisons than are supposed; consequently all the conceits and vagaries of madness are prevalent in our prison wards.

The description of a weak-minded prisoner by her associates is not a little characteristic.

"*She's not all there!*" is the observation often whispered by one prisoner to another.

The religious element seems as often predominant amongst our insane prisoners as in regular lunatic asylums. Women will rave of the Judgment Day having come, and of the flames consuming them in their cells for past transgressions, with all the wild fervency of fanatics whom religion, or rather a perversion of religion, has driven mad. One woman was in the constant habit of complaining of the devils that haunted her all night, and sat round her bed and hissed at her.

These women proceed eventually to Fisherton, but there has always appeared to me to be an unnecessary delay in sending them there—and there is an old maxim that "delays are dangerous."

Some of these madwomen place much confidence in their matrons, and are greatly influenced by them. In proceeding to Fisherton, one woman seemed to be sustained against her horror of the train, and the speed at which it bore her to her destination, by the simple touch of the matron's hand. In passing through the tunnels, she flung herself into the officer's arms and whispered, "Take care of me, miss!" with a touching faith in her guardian's power to avert all evil.

Self-destruction is the great temptation, here as elsewhere, to these demented creatures—the ills they bear being sufficient incentive to take that dreadful leap to the ills they know not of. Hanging, as before remarked, is the principal means adopted, and I think that too many of these cases are put down as feigned attempts in our annual reports. It is diffi-

cult to detect which are the real, and which are indisputably the false.

There must ever linger in the memory of all matrons who did duty at Brixton Prison, in the early days, the desperate leap from life unto death of one, Mary Johnson, a woman of taciturn manners, and of a jealous temperament. She had been on unfriendly terms with her officer for some time, taking offence with the old prisoner's readiness, and brooding over her fancied grievances.

Johnson's cell was in the West wing, in the D ward, the top one of the prison, which, as there was a fall of forty or fifty feet from it, was protected by an iron railing or balcony, of three or four feet high. Johnson had had a quarrel with a "pal" a few days previously, and this had tended to make her sullen in her manners, abrupt, and even insolent, to her officer. One evening, when the prisoners were being ordered to their cells, Johnson begged the favour of a stay-lace from her officer, who, willing to oblige her, repaired to the store-cell for that purpose. Returning towards the cell of

Johnson, she discovered that the door had not been closed after the usual manner, and advancing closer saw that the prisoner was standing by it, as if waiting for her. Becoming suspicious, the officer paused for a moment, when Johnson darted forth, full of fury and madness, towards her. The matron ran a little way back down the ward, followed by the woman, gained the store-cell, and shut herself in; and the prisoner, thus baffled, turned suddenly to the railing—and with one awful leap cleared it, and went dashing to the bottom!

The dead, heavy thud on the flagstones below—the bloody heap of clothes lying there, to blanch every face, and sicken every heart—the hush and horror of prisoners and prison-matrons, will be remembered by all whose business lay in that prison on that memorable and awful night.

The woman, despite the height from which she had fallen, remained for a few hours alive, but unconscious, before death closed the tragedy.

Since this calamity the galleries have been wired over, to prevent a repetition of the occurrence; and since the attack on the prison-matron, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, knives, to all prisoners, have been rigidly forbidden.

Such ghastly scenes in the tragedy of human life are fortunately not of frequent occurrence; the care and the constant vigilance exercised by the officers checking most of the prisoners' attempts to destroy either themselves or others.

But from such extra responsibilities to the hard working servants of our female prisons the officers have a right to claim exemption. In the case of women whose eccentricities are too great to allow them to be "in solitary," and yet are not sufficiently demonstrative to warrant an order for their removal to a lunatic asylum, a different discipline should be exercised. A special ward should be provided for women whose sanity is doubtful, and the proofs of whose weakness of mind are really apparent; it is merciful to the prisoner, and it is but common fairness to her officer.

CHAPTER XII.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—EDWARDS.

THE subject of the preceding chapter brings this woman, whom I will call Edwards, forcibly to my remembrance. That she was not mad at the time the incidents which relate to her occurred, but that those incidents were the first proofs of her mind becoming weak and unstable, I am perfectly assured.

Edwards was a fair prisoner, as prisoners are in general—a pretty-faced woman, with a high opinion of herself and her personal charms, and

with a horror of being considered an Irishwoman, or of Irish extraction.

For a woman to have an objection to anything is an incentive to a number of aggravating prisoners to make capital out of her antipathy; Edwards therefore soon became a subject for practical joking, and was often roused to a frenzy by her co-mates and *sisters* in exile imitating, with much burlesque exaggeration, the rich Milesian accent of the island she was so anxious to disclaim all knowledge of.

One woman possessed a rare ability for teasing Edwards, and making her her enemy; she had a particular wish to argue the matter with her, and would interrupt the discussion every now and then by the cool assertion, "You know you're Irish, Edwards. Why don't you say so, and be quiet? Everybody knows you're Irish, just as well as I do." And if these remarks occurred in the airing ground, Love, as the woman was called, had to fly for her life and dodge round the other prisoners, until the unseemly nature of the proceedings called forth the matron's interference.

Edwards took an intense hatred to this Love, whose persistence in maintaining her Irish extraction would have incensed a female of much more equanimity of temperament.

"I'll have that woman's life, see if I don't!" she said to the matron, and she took an oath to that effect, which, as oaths of vengeance are prolific amongst female prisoners, was disregarded by the officer. Nursing her wrongs, however, Edwards continued to brood on the indignity of being considered an Irishwoman; and, full of a scheme to carry out her threats, suddenly refused to take exercise in the airing ground.

"I shan't go without you carry me out!" she remarked; and being in an ill-humour, she was allowed for once to remain in her cell, more especially as she would have created the usual *furore* by rushing at Love in the airing yard. Before the women were taken into that yard for exercise, Edwards had contrived to tear out the frame and glass of her cell-window, which looked on the airing ground, and she had succeeded, by much contraction of her body, in ensconcing herself on the narrow sill,

with two jagged pieces of stone used in cleaning the pavement of the wards. Love, however, was not well that day, or for some other reason did not leave her cell, and Edwards remained coiled on her window-sill, waiting to fling her missiles through the outer iron bars at the head of her who had so grievously tormented her. The next day Edwards again refused to leave her cell, and again resumed her post, where she was discovered, by the matron, in the same position, watching with the stealthiness and intentness of a wild beast. Upon being asked the reason for her eccentric position, she very plainly stated it, and confirmed by a second oath her fixed intention to stop Mary Ann Love from ever calling her Irish again.

It became necessary to remove Edwards to the "dark" for this threat, which, in connection with the damage she had committed on the prison property, constituted a grave offence against the rules.

In the dark cells Edwards continued for three days, rational in her manners, cool in her demeanour, and making no noisy demonstrations that would render it imperative to keep her in the refractory ward for a

longer period of time. She completed her term of punishment, and returned to her cell. Whether, during her absence, the window had been repaired, or by some omission left in the state in which Edwards had placed it, certain it is that she was once again in the same position on the sill, with the window removed, and fresh missiles in her hand, biding the hour of her vengeance. Love, the prisoner, was warned of the malice still fostered against her, and transferred, I believe, to another airing yard beyond the ken of her enemy; and, as it was winter, and a keen, frosty air blowing at the time, it was considered that it would be as well to let Edwards tire naturally of her intention, and rue, of her own free will and accord, the substraction of her window and frame from the cell.

Edwards, however, tired not of her resolves, but kept to her post and defied the frost, and the snow that set in after the frost, until it became necessary to remove her to another part of the prison, where the possibility of meeting her past tormentor would not be likely to occur.

Time went on; it appeared as if a change of

cell and a host of fresh faces had dissipated the dark intention previously fostered by Edwards, and the matrons were congratulating themselves on her improved behaviour, when an event occurred that afforded a signal proof of the prisoner's concentrativeness.

The officer having occasion to visit Edwards's cell one morning, the door was left ajar while she discoursed with the prisoner. The cell was some distance down the ward, at the end of which was a door opening on another ward, and a fresh division of prisoners. From this second ward there suddenly rang forth the voice of Love, engaged in some little altercation with her officer. Edwards's attention was attracted on the instant; the voice of her old tormentor aroused all the old vindictive feelings, and, with a sudden dash at the door, she flung it open, and tore at a headlong speed down the ward. The object of her rush towards the second ward was instantly apparent to the matron, who ran after her, calling forth her almost breathless warning to get Mary Ann Love out of the way. Meanwhile Edwards continued to run, not much impeded in her pro-

gress by the sudden clinging of an assistant matron round her neck, whom she bore along with her at an alarming rate of progression.

"I'll learn her to call me Irish!" yelled Edwards; "I'll have her life—I *will* have her life!"

But Mary Ann Love, by this time, had been removed out of the way, and the matrons of the second ward were ready to receive Edwards, and for the second time to balk her in her project. No further opportunity was ever presented to her to wreak her vengeance on Love; gradual signs of aberration of intellect manifested themselves, and in due course she exchanged Brixton Prison for Fisherton Lunatic Asylum. At the latter place she improved so much, that, a few weeks before her prison leave expired, she returned to Brixton to finish her sentence, to all appearances completely cured. Whether she still entertains her past resentful feelings against Love, and has still the same objection to being considered of Irish descent, I have had no opportunity of learning.

CHAPTER XIII.

VISITORS.

Both at Millbank and Brixton Prisons there sets in a steady and incessant stream of visitors, furnished with orders from Parliament-street or the Secretary of State—visitors who are actuated by every motive for stepping out of their way that it is possible to conceive. Scarcely a week in the year occurs without some one from the outer world passing by order through the gates and being conducted from pentagon to pentagon, and ward to ward, by a matron of the establishment—a plea-

sant proof, if proof were requisite, of the unfailing interest shown by society in prisoners and prison life. Hither arrive the philosopher, who is anxious to carry out his theory, who has only a few questions to ask of a general tendency, and cares nothing for prison details or statistics; the man of facts and figures, big with his mission of finding fault with existing prison systems, as opposed to his own peculiar ideas of prison management, which Parliament Street tabooes, and to whom the Secretary of State is always returning vague answers through *his* secretary; the philanthropist, who is anxious to see good in all, and to do his best to bring that good to light; the poet or novelist, in search of a new idea, which the wild lives of prisoners may suggest; the writer of magazine articles; the magistrate; the clergyman; the noble; the artist; the curious foreigner, anxious to compare English discipline with that of his own country; the visiting ladies, and the ladies who appear to have strayed in from mere caprice, showing no earthly interest in what they see, or sympathy

for anything that passes before them during the regular tour of their inspection.

Visitors of minor importance are accompanied round the prison by a principal matron, great guns, who are likely to make a noise in print if slighted, by the governor of Millbank or the superintendent of Brixton. To those who may feel inclined, from these pages of prison life, to follow in their steps, and take an interest—and an interest that shall do good—in prisoners, I would suggest that there are more features of general attraction to be observed, and more instruction to be gained, at Brixton than at Millbank.

Visitors at times are very neglectful of the prison-rules concerning fees to Government servants, and singularly forgetful of the officer's feelings. The feeing of servants has become so much a general rule in society, that visitors appear awkward and embarrassed if they cannot leave a *douceur* with the officer in attendance. Possibly it will not be out of place to mention here, for the benefit of inexperienced visitors, that no fees are expected by the

matrons, or are allowed on any pretence whatever to be taken, and that the offer of money to the officers of our Government prisons is an act which brings an indignant blush to their cheeks, and makes their fingers itch to box the ears of the would-be donor. An instance occurs to my recollection of a visitor once coolly offering a sovereign to a deputy-superintendent who had conducted him round the prison; and the horror and disgust of that officer may be readily imagined. In one visit made to Millbank Prison by a foreign prince of celebrity, his Highness appeared very much perplexed as to the right method of evincing his gratitude for all the courtesy that had been extended to him, and all the care bestowed to make him as thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the system as the limited time of his visit would permit.

"I should so like to make one small present," he said more than once: and upon the rule as to the non-receipt of presents having been explained to him, he expressed his thanks very warmly and heartily for the attention

he had received, winding up with the words—"but if I could but have made one little present. Oh! I *am* so sorry!" And the prince went away, truly grieved that he could not pay for the trouble he had given.

I remember a rumour once circulating in Millbank Prison, amongst both officers and prisoners, of an intended visit from the Secretary of State. The prisoners became violently excited on the instant; they had heard so much of the Secretary of State, of the licences that were granted, and of the orders issued by that valuable member of the Government, that the whole body of female convicts began to suffer from repressed excitement. A general idea seemed to prevail that the Secretary of State knew all about each woman's sentence, would be able to afford the clearest details concerning the day of her liberty, and willing to listen to the particulars of each case, and perhaps, in the excitement of the moment, to knock off six or nine months.

"Won't I ask him about my leave directly

I see him!" remarked one woman; while others said, "Won't I tell him how I have been served the last three months!" "Won't I ask if I may go to Brixton at once!" and "Won't I ask if he's quite certain I am not to go out before the twentieth—because he's counted it up all wrong, I know!"

A vague idea that there would be a kind of grand procession through the wards, with the Secretary of State at the head thereof, marshalled by the whole staff of the prison, was prevalent amongst the women; several fancy descriptions of his appearance were hazarded, and there was not the slightest doubt but that everybody would know him at once. And in due course, I believe, that important member of Government passed through the prison in a quiet and unceremonious manner, completely deceiving the prisoners, who were very much discomfited a day or two afterwards to hear that he had called, had asked after no one's time, and had brought no information.

During these visits, the general body of

prisoners are well-behaved and orderly; the discipline is very striking to a person unacquainted with prisons, and he is at a loss to connect such silence and decorum with the character of the women through whose wards he passes. A male visitor in a female prison attracts a greater amount of attention than one of the opposite sex; and in an undertone, after he has departed, a few of the boldest will venture to give their opinions on his good or bad looks, his height, figure, and general deportment.

In addition to the non-professional visitors, there are a certain number of lady visitors, who may be termed professionals—that is, who have a general order to visit the prison, are interested in the prisoners, and assist, in a humble way, the scripture-reader, schoolmistress and chaplain.

Those lady visitors, who are kind and patient without being patronizing, exert a salutary influence over the women; and, as a general rule, the prisoners are respectful, and even grateful for the interest evinced in them.

Much good has been done in this way, and much good will continue to be done. On women of any thought at all, it makes a deep, often a lasting, impression to witness these ladies' interest, their anxiety to see them better Christians, their efforts in every way to bring about the good end for which they unostentatiously and perseveringly strive. And to the honour of these lady visitors it may be remarked, that their interest in our erring sisters is not confined to the prisons, but takes a wider range, follows them into the world, and earnestly strives to give them an honest place therein. Prisoners who have shown a desire to begin a new life, and for some reason or other are debarred the privileges offered by our charitable institutions, have found sincere friends, whose advice and money, and whose homes even, have been generously proffered them.

Amongst so many, it is almost needless to say that there are prisoners whom no kindness will affect, whom no interest in their salvation will raise one iota in the scale. They are content to bide

their time in prison, and look forward to the brighter days of liberty, as to the old days of drink, debauchery, and crime, which led them first to ruin. Women of this class will affect repentance with such semblance of truth, that the lady visitors, anxious to make converts, are very readily deceived. One lady visitor, I regret to add, was robbed of two ten pound notes at Millbank Prison, and all the search and vigilance of the matrons were unable ever afterwards to discover a trace of them. This is, however, an exception to the general conduct of the prisoners to lady visitors; as a rule, they are not insensible to the interest taken in their present and future welfare.

These ladies bring presents of little books to the women, which are first shown to the chaplain, whose verdict on their suitability and appropriateness having been obtained, the prisoners are at liberty to receive them. At Brixton Prison a visiting lady may obtain permission to read a little story to the Wing women, and assemble round her a number of prisoners for that purpose. If the story be amusing, and the

moral not too irritably obtrusive—the fault of moral stories in general—the women become quickly interested; if too religious, they begin to whisper and mutter to each other, and make grimaces. In what is termed the Old Prison at Brixton, the visitor is furnished with a camp seat, during her little chat with a favourite prisoner in her cell. Both at Millbank and Brixton the visitor who preaches the least is liked the most; for there is an art in conversing with such women in which some of the best-intentioned visitors are deficient; and to play the part of chaplain, and to play it badly, is a grave mistake, which does more harm than good. To say the right word at the right time is a gift bestowed on very few of us, and it is natural that an error of judgment should be committed now and then.

Still it is pleasant to reiterate that good is effected by the untiring and unselfish efforts of these lady-visitors—that they are a little band of earnest-thinking, persevering women, who are often rewarded for their faithful services in God's cause by a prisoner's struggles

to amend, and to leave for ever behind in the shadowy past the things of darkness that belong to it.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—JANE DUNBABIN, LYDIA CAMBLIN, AND JOHANNAH LENNAN.

In my sketches of prison character, it is somewhat late in the day to remark that I have not adopted any chronological order, but have chosen the subjects for portraiture, more for the contrast their varied natures were likely to present, than with any regard to the date at which they entered or left our Government establishments.

Jane Dunbabin was of the order of troublesome prisoners, difficult to manage, hard to understand,

whose sanity was a matter of doubt, and whose prison virtues of order and obedience were not particularly apparent. She was a copyist of bad manners, anxious to imitate the more daring of her associates, and somewhat proud of the fleeting notoriety that might be gained by smashing in of windows or a rending of prison sheets. Deceitful and crafty too, and with many monkey tricks, it may be imagined that she was one of the worst class of prisoners. Still she was not a very desperate woman, and I have singled her out from the mass for one particular trait in her character, that I consider may be interesting to the reader.

That trait of character stands as evidence of the better nature lying deep in the heart —lying there dormant, mayhap for years, until some true word or fair action touches it and gives it life. Jane Dunbabin might have been a troublesome prisoner to the end of her sentence—and, indeed, I cannot, in honesty, aver that she was ever a model one, or a woman to be implicitly relied on—if she had not been transferred to Brixton Prison, and "taken a fancy," as it may

be termed, to a particular matron in service there at that time. That the matron was kind to her and studied her particular nature a little, is to assert no more than that which one-half of the matrons attempt in every case; no particular pains were taken with Dunbabin, the prison rules were enforced in the usual manner, which somehow seemed to please her, and she "took a fancy," as before remarked. Dunbabin became always anxious to stand well in the good graces of her matron, and could be influenced so much by her gentle remonstrance as to give up any preconceived ideas as to a "smash" that might have been entertained.

"If you say it will put you out—that your head can't stand it—I'll wait a little while, miss."

"It is sure to put me out, Dunbabin."

"Then I'll put it off. Just for a little while, you know."

"Very well."

"You'll tell me when your head can stand it a little better?" she would ask, almost childishly, and would be appeased like a child by a promise to that effect.

There came a time when Dunbabin's better behaviour, at Brixton, brought about a transfer from the Old Prison to the Wing; and here her demeanour was a little more variable, owing to the absence of the face that had shed some little light upon her darkened way. Still the new matron also was kind, and her charge continued to improve.

When the old matron fell ill, and was removed to a room near the infirmary, the news circulated through the prison, and in due course reached Dunbabin. The East Wing faces the infirmary, with the airing yard for infirmary patients lying between, and Dunbabin was accustomed to appear at her cell window for an hour, or even two at a time, and stolidly look across the airing yard towards the infirmary quarters, where the matron lay sick.

At this time she made many inquiries respecting the health of the sick officer, and evinced considerable satisfaction at any scrap of news. That matron's sickness became an excuse for keeping Dunbabin in better order: "If you break out, Miss —— will be very sorry to hear it, and the news may throw her back again."

And Dunbabin, in consequence, would put off the evil day of breaking out, and console herself by climbing to her prison window and watching the one opposite, which she guessed belonged to the favourite matron's quarters. She now took a new freak into her head, the proper method of checking which, without bringing on one of her old outbreaks, caused no little embarrassment. She began to open her cell window, no matter what the weather might be, about the time when other prisoners were turning into their beds, and to shout across the airing yard, "Good night, my Miss ——!" This "Good night, my Miss ——" having been repeated twice, the cell-window would close, and Dunbabin quietly compose herself to rest.

And for many days, until the prisoners complained of the noise, and the infirmary patients began to grumble at "that Dunbabin's foolery," the same salutation rang out twice every evening, at eight o'clock, with unerring punctuality. When she was remonstrated with upon this little variation from the usual monotony, she took advantage of the noise made

by the general closing of the doors in her ward—"shutting-up time," as it is termed—to repeat her good nights for a few evenings, but finally gave in, and contented herself with gazing from her cell window, generally until the matron's nurse—or, as she became better, the matron herself—looked across the airing yard for an instant, before the infirmary ward window was closed for the night.

Dunbabin, in due time, took her leave, and has not been heard of since; let us hope that the better nature, of which she had given some signs, even in the narrow cell, has, with the enjoyment of liberty and of better days, expanded and born fruit.

The character which stands second on my list, in the present chapter, I offer as a portrait worthy of public consideration, not so much in itself, as in the effect produced by its appearance on the general body of prisoners. The girl I will call Lydia Camblin was of the order of juvenile prisoners, one of the few child convicts that appear at Millbank and Brixton Prisons, and offer a sad and striking proof of the vice which has been natural to them almost from the cradle. She was the

youngest looking, if not the youngest, prisoner that ever arrived to serve a long sentence in penal servitude. One could only shudder to think of the teaching that must have been instilled into her, to give forth such deadly evidence of apt docility in crime at an age when other children are still innocent and childlike. Lydia Camblin was said to be not more than ten years of age; I have not seen the register book of the prison, and, therefore, cannot assert that that was the correct age; certain it is that in appearance—which, with prisoners, is terribly deceptive—she did not seem to be older than I have stated here.

A golden-haired, rosy-faced child, of slight, almost fragile figure, one could fancy her fresh from a loving mother's arms, and that some horrible mistake had placed her in the uncongenial atmosphere in which I first beheld her.

I have said it was more the effect produced by the girl's appearance at Millbank than anything about the girl herself which led me to make mention of her name. Lydia Camblin was no model prisoner, nor a child deserving more interest or compassion than her

tender years might naturally excite; for any trait of character that expressed innocence or weakness, or anything but the cunning and vice beyond her years, it would have been in vain to look. When Lydia Camblin made her first appearance before the majority of old prison women, the effect was startling and touching. She had been hastily attired in the regulation dress of the establishment —which dress, although the smallest sized woman's gown kept in stock, was still preposterously long and inconvenient for her. When she made her appearance with the gown tucked and pinned up in a manner to facilitate her progress, and with that fair child's face under the great prison cap, the whole prison seemed to stand aghast.

Women looked from one to the other, wringing their hands, and compressing their lips together; one woman clasped her hands instinctively, and cried, "My God, look here!"—and presently there were deep, convulsive sobs escaping on all sides.

"It's a shame—it's an awful shame!—she shouldn't have come here!" more than one woman ventured to exclaim; and it became necessary to

pass Lydia Camblin to her cell as quickly as possible, in order to calm the excitement of the women.

The first surprise over, the prisoners settled down into their usual hard, phlegmatic demeanour; Camblin was soon a subject for no further comment or excitement; but it was singular that, on her appearance at Brixton Prison, the same effect was created, the same chord touched in the majority of hearts not easily impressed by any outward circumstances. There was something so strange and unnatural in this child's position, that the sense of what was right—what should have been, had common care been exercised upon her—asserted itself at once, the instinctive flash of a true woman's sympathy and sorrow.

But Lydia Camblin was scarce deserving this attention; there have been child prisoners before, and since, more worthy of the honest sensation demonstrated. This girl might have been an old prison bird of forty years of age for her coolness, presence of mind, and craft. She was terribly old in thought even for a woman thrice her age, was hard to impress, and difficult to restrain. From her lips it has been the matron's

unpleasant lot to hear the foul and obscene words which escape, in excited moments, from the most unprincipled of prisoners; one could believe in hearing her, and in looking at the pale, childlike face confronting the observer, that she was *born bad*, or that, if there were any parents whom she could recollect, they must have been

"God and heaven reversed to her!"

I do not know what law allows children of so tender an age to be placed amidst such scenes, but there are always in our Government prisons two or three what are termed "Juvenile Prisoners," and who, profiting by example, are often as insolent and callous, as their older companions. Something better might be done than sentencing these children to penal servitude; an unnatural sentence for a crime for which they can scarcely be considered accountable—the result of that moral blindness to which one ray of God's light and truth seems never to have been visible.

Johannah Lennan, the last of the triumvirate which forms the subject of this chapter,

was of the old stereotyped class of prisoners —perverse, "fractious," and unmanageable—which began with prisons, and will last whilst prisons are requisite. That there was a little more originality in her escapades is the reason why I have selected her from the numbers like unto her, who keep prisons full, and matrons ever busy.

If Johannah Lennan ever broke out, it was with a little variation from the usual manner, with a vocal accompaniment, or an extempore dance. If she were locked up in "the dark," her mind, active for mischief, would plan something "new and striking" expressly for the occasion. She was an adept in punching in the pit of the stomach those male officers who were sent to remove her to the refractory cell, and was far from a bad boxer, when she thought occasion necessitated a display of pugilistic force.

Her principal feat at Millbank Prison was that of climbing to her window sill, sitting thereon, and passing her head, arms, and *legs*, through the exterior iron bars. In this extraordinary

and ridiculous position Johannah Lennan would remain for a considerable time, refusing to change it, and expressing her satisfaction at the state of affairs in general.

"Don't trouble yourself about me, Miss ——," she said, impudently, in reply to the matron's remonstrance; "it's very comfor'ble up here, and one gets a mighty lot of fresh air, which the Lord knows is wanted. I ain't a-comin' down these eight-and-forty hours."

And Johannah Lennan kept to her position, until it became necessary to send for the male officers.

"Oh! here's the lads!" she said, on their arrival; "as if I couldn't a-been allowed up here a bit!"

"Are you coming down, Lennan?" was the gruff demand.

"Not if I can help it," was the response; "I mean to stick here as long as I can, my fine fellers!"

And Lennan retained so firm a hold of the iron bars that it became an effort requiring no small strength to draw her back into her cell,

she screaming, swearing, and blaspheming all the time. After a sudden wrench, a considerable exertion of physical force—"a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether!"—Lennan and the officers would come down on their backs in the centre of the cell—the former with the frame of the window wedged tightly round her, a trophy of the strength and tenacity with which she had clung to the last.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INFIRMARY.

THE ruses that have been adopted by prisoners, and are constantly being adopted to the present day, to obtain admittance into the infirmary, may be regarded in a more lenient manner, when the difference of diet and regimen between the cell and the infirmary is considered. Women who have been schemers all their life, will plan for the

better diet and the lax discipline of the latter —women who are desperate, and know no fear, will go within an inch of death for the comfortable quarters where there is no hard work, the companionship of their own class, and almost everything to be had for the mere request. Not that the inmates of the infirmary are all hypocrites, or prisoners who have found a place there through self-injury; the greater number may be considered the really ill and suffering, whose health has been affected by prison air, or who have brought the seeds of disease with them from the outer world.

In Doctor Guy's report for 1860, to the Directors of Convict Prisons, there appears a general summary of Infirmary Sick. It may be interesting to the reader to know that, of four hundred and seventy-two female prisoners, there was but a daily average of twenty-one sick. The number admitted into Millbank Prison Infirmary during the year was two hundred and seventy-five. The average number of days spent by each prisoner in the infirmary is set down at

twenty-seven. At Millbank Prison there was an increase of deaths to the number of five; at Brixton there were no fewer than fourteen deaths during the year. The prison at Brixton, it must be remembered, however, has accommodation for a larger number of women; the daily average number of prisoners for 1860 was six hundred and twenty-three, in lieu of four hundred and seventy-two at Millbank. Women who are very delicate, whose failing health necessitates a change, are also drafted from Millbank to Brixton, and help to swell the number of infirmary sick at the latter prison. From Mr. Rendle's report, we learn that the number of sick admitted into the Brixton Infirmary, during the year, was two hundred and fifty-two, and that the daily average was thirty-nine. It is but fair to add, also, that out of fourteen deaths which occurred at Brixton Prison, seven were cases that might be considered incurable at the time of the women's arrival.

The diseases are of all kinds and characters —there is no particular ailment peculiar to

prisons, save an imaginary complaint called the "prison mumps," with which women fancy they are attacked occasionally. Pulmonary consumption carries off a few, but it is singular that the deaths from consumption occur more frequently in our male than in our female prisons. Dr. Guy calls attention to the fact that, during the year 1860, fifty-nine consumptive male prisoners were removed from Millbank, and but one from the female side of the prison. So great a disparity is not accounted for by the fact that the males form seventy-seven per cent., and the women twenty-three per cent., of the whole convict establishment at Millbank.* In Millbank Infirmary, on the female side, there were, during the year, only six women admitted who were suffering from pulmonary consumption; on the male side the number was no less than forty-five.

Now and then, on medical grounds, a true

* This was in 1860, the reader will remember—there is not so much difference in the respective numbers of each sex at the present time.

sufferer receives a pardon for her past offences, and is allowed to go free, that she may die in the arms of the friends or the parents from whom she may have fled in early days.

The infirmary at Millbank Prison consists of a series of Rooms in Pentagon Two, situated over a certain portion of the superintendents' quarters. Each room contains several small beds, arranged in hospital-ward fashion. At Brixton the infirmary is more apart from the prison—is, in fact, a wing near the outer gates, and, as already remarked, affords accommodation for a greater number of patients than that of Millbank.

The rules are almost similar in both infirmaries, and the remainder of this sketch may, therefore, be considered as equally applicable to both.

An infirmary officer or matron is always in attendance, passing from room to room, and seeing that all is well and safe—a restless and unsettled post, and certainly not the most enviable berth in the service. There are, also,

an infirmary nurse and an infirmary cook; at Brixton, the chief matron's duties are to attend to the requirements of those stricken down by illness.

The women, in common cases, are chiefly waited upon by those prisoners known as infirmary cleaners; in cases that are exceptional, or of importance, extra hands are called into requisition. Much feeling and sympathy are evinced by the cleaners for the invalids to whom they officiate as nurses; and occasionally, on the part of the invalids, no little ingratitude for the trouble and pains taken with them. Attached to the infirmary are a certain number of cells, large, well-ventilated, and containing beds for invalids and attendants; hither are removed cases that are likely to prove infectious, or patients who, even in the midst of their failing health, are insolent, and fierce, and destructive to the last.

Infirmary patients are allowed the best of everything—nothing within reasonable limits is refused when requested by a prisoner really ill. I

remember one woman at Millbank sick unto death, suddenly taking a fancy for grapes—if she could only have a bunch of real grapes again! It was winter time, and grapes were worth their weight in gold—the matron would refer the matter to Dr. Baly, when he arrived.

And Dr. Baly — that highly-gifted physician was consulting medical adviser to Millbank Prison at the time — ordered grapes forthwith, at any price, and at once. It was a sick woman's fancy, but fancies even are studied in the infirmary ward, and great kindness is shown by the authorities in all cases. No hospital patient has greater care and attention; to prisoners who have been always ignorant and poor, the infirmary appears like fairy-land.

Still, taking the infirmary patients altogether, there is not much difference in the character between them and their more robust sisters doing prison work. The same ingratitude, and selfishness and callousness are evinced towards each other; and to the prison officers, the same duplicity, craft, and vin-

dictive feeling. There are women whom nothing will soften, whom no kindness will affect.

"Breaks out" occur even in the infirmary; the passion of jealousy, to which all prisoners are prone, leading them to imagine that too much attention has been shown to one invalid, and too much neglect of their own selfish requirements. A woman will break out at a supposed slight, and struggle from her bed to wreak her vengeance on the crockery near her. One prisoner, of the name of Armstrong, in Millbank Infirmary, took a fancied neglect of the doctor so much to heart, that on his next appearance, she sprang from her bed, and seized the poker with the intention of splitting his head open. "I'll learn you to say I don't want any arrowroot, you beggar!" she screeched forth.

The same woman, in the days of her convalescence, and probably to prolong her stay in the infirmary, feigned a trance with such excellent effect, as for some time to puzzle even the surgeon in attendance. 'It was more a state of

coma than of trance, and necessitated the administration of beef-tea with a teaspoon. After the surgeon was perfectly convinced of the trick —and had read her a lecture on her wickedness, as she lay on her bed, in as rigid and deathlike a position as she could assume—she maintained her inflexible position for two days, and was only brought to reason by the mixture of a little assafœtida with her beef-tea, at which fresh insult she sprang up in bed and assailed the attendant with a torrent of invective only to be heard in its true strength and richness in the wards of our Government prisons.

Those prisoners who are well enough to leave their beds, huddle round the fire and talk together in a low voice. Many stories of the old days when they were pals together, or their "schools" had not been broken up, or Jim had not thrown them over for the fancy-girl they are going to throttle when they gain their liberty, are related over the infirmary fire; it is these days of convalescence which the women prize, and which they are anxious to extend by every means in their power.

A few of the more industrious, who are anxious to add to their gratuities, sit up in bed and work at their handkerchiefs, or at cap-making, almost before their strength allows them; others, wholly idle and utterly careless about the future, will do no work on any pretence whatever during the glorious days of infirmary diet—of beer, and port wine, and mutton chops.

Every day the prison chaplain arrives to talk with these sick women; to strive at the old up-hill work of reformation, hoping for better results in the greater weakness that has befallen them. His labours may be rewarded in some instances; in others, promises are readily made, to be broken on the first occasion when anything occurs to cross their variable tempers. The prayers of the day are read every morning, with more or less effect, according to circumstances. If a woman has died, or been removed to another prison, there is some chance of touching these hearts of marble.

Still, even the death of an old comrade does not affect them sensibly; the callous nature, in most cases, forbids any display of sentiment.

In the last moments of an erring sister, there is a hush, mayhap; if a death occur in the night, and there is much wandering to and fro of prison officers and doctor, the women will mutter about "the row," and about their sleep being broken by an unnecessary uproar.

"It's precious hard, when my life depends upon it, I can't have a good night's rest," may be the muttered remark, as the complainant turns restlessly in her bed.

All depends upon the past character of the dying woman: what were her antecedents—was she a favourite with the women for her "pluck," or her defiance of all rules—does she leave a pal to mourn extravagantly for her, and have a smash at all the windows, by way of distraction to her grief?

It has been remarked, by the surgeon of Brixton Prison, that deaths occur with greater frequency in the fourth year of a woman's incarceration than at any other period of imprisonment. The following curious tabular account, in proof of this, was submitted by that gentleman to the Directors

of Government Prisons, in his report for 1860:—

Year.	Deaths during the 1st year of sentence.	Deaths during the 2nd year.	Deaths during the 3rd year.	Deaths during the 4th year.	Deaths during the 5th year.	Deaths during the 6th year.	Deaths during the 7th year.
1857	...	4	3	6	...	...	...
1858	2	3	3	5	...	2	1
1859	...	2	2	4	...	2	...
1860	...	3	3	6	1	1	...
Total	2	12	11	21	1	5	1

Women naturally weak, or women whose lives, up to the period of their "misfortune," have never known restraint, appear to give way under the confinement, after a hard struggle; but amidst these prisoners are several, who, with the less care and attention they would have found in their own homes, would have surely met a more early death in the world.

So life goes on day by day, week by week, in the prison infirmaries of Millbank and Brixton—kindness that is thoughtful and unremitting being ever extended to these wild natures in the hour of

their distress, or in that hour of danger which they have brought upon themselves. In the dimly-lighted rooms the shadow of the Angel's wings falls at times, takes away one of these ungovernable natures, and reads the lesson which is profited by or scoffed at. There are arrows that strike into the heart, or that glance therefrom, as from something which no power under heaven can pierce.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRISON CHARACTERS—MARY ANN SEAGO AND JONES.

THE subject of my last chapter reminds me of two prison characters, whose eccentricities in the Brixton Infirmary rendered them at the time somewhat notorious.

Seago, it may be remembered by those of my readers who are versed in criminal annals, was sentenced on the 22nd of May, 1854, to penal servitude for life, for the death of her stepson, mur-

dered in a paroxysm of rage, by dashing his brains out against the mantel-piece. This woman became a confirmed invalid very shortly after her arrival at Brixton, and was admitted into the infirmary, disease of the heart, from which she suffered, rendering confinement to her cell a matter of impossibility.

Seago was only saved from capital punishment by its being proved that she had purchased a penny pie for the child within an hour or two of its decease, a fact that was set down in her favour, as evidence that no vindictive feeling was entertained against the child. Such was the effect of this slight fragment of evidence, which turned the scales in her favour, and brought a sentence of less severity upon her—a sentence that was just and fair.

Seago, when not possessed with the demon of discontent, was on the whole a rational prisoner, and only evinced her demoniac propensities when aroused by any slight, fancied or otherwise, which she could take to herself, and allow to rankle in her mind. She was a woman of some education; fond of hard words, and in her best moods somewhat fine in her way. Lying in her infirmary bed, she was partial to amusing or boring her fellow-sufferers

with lengthy accounts of her past respectability—the friends she had known—the home she had had—the father and mother who had brought her up so well!

If my memory serve me rightly, her father was master of a workhouse; and she was accustomed to speak of him with considerable reverence, and to mourn her own unbridled passions, which had brought her to so sad an end. A very little roused her: a taunt of the prisoners, a remonstrance of the matrons, would engender so violent a state of excitement, that her own life stood in peril by her passion. It was easy to imagine the fit of evil rage that had ended in the death of her step-son, the year before she came under my notice.

She was fond of arguing, and as little disturbed the even tenor of her way, every allowance was shown her, and the women, taken as a body, were conciliatory and obliging.

Seago, one day in the infirmary, took offence against her infirmary nurse, and, in the heat of her passion, suddenly turned out of bed, wherein she had lain for many weeks, and

walked very coolly and stealthily from her own room to the apartment of the nurse, a little way distant. That officer was considerably amazed by Seago's appearance, *à la* Lady Macbeth, and no less alarmed when she saw her snatch up a knife that lay handy, and brandish it above her head.

Fortunately, help was at hand, and Seago was removed to her old quarters, it being impossible to punish one in so delicate a state of health. She repented, or feigned to repent, of this last act, and became friends with the nurse again, until, on medical grounds, I believe, a free pardon was finally granted her.

Free pardon, in cases that must infallibly prove fatal, is occasionally granted; Government is not harsh with those whose days are numbered, and makes the generous offer of freedom for the little while they may yet have to live. To be spared to die out of prison is estimated as a great boon by these sufferers.

Seago obtained her liberty, and, I understand, was shortly afterwards found dead in her bed in the home to which she had returned.

The prisoner Jones became an early inmate

of Brixton Infirmary, owing to her time of confinement drawing near. She had not spent half her probation at Millbank, but her condition rendered her eligible for transfer to the Surrey prison. Ensconced in the infirmary, Jones became particularly remarkable for her fits of sullenness and obstinacy—pig-headed and indomitable doggedness, which no kind treatment could soften in the least. She was one of those hard beings, to whom such frequent allusion has been made throughout these volumes—taking all kindness as her right, and never, by a look or word, testifying her appreciation of it.

This indomitable spirit of obstinacy set in immediately after her confinement—before four-and-twenty hours had passed over her head, and of a surety before she had given a thought to the merciful Providence that had carried her safely through her trial. She was always full of fancies, and a new and sudden whim seized her that a corner bed then vacated would be better for her and her baby than that on which she was then reposing.

"What do you want that bed for, Jones?"

"It's against the wall, and the baby can't fall out."

"But the baby will be safe here."

"No, it won't. I know it won't. I'm as certain as I'm a living woman that it will fall out whop in the night."

Jones argued the point with such obstinacy, and exhibited such excitement, that it was considered best to humour her, more especially as it was probable that she would, at the risk of her life, avail herself of the first opportunity to take the bed for herself. After the consulting surgeon's advice had been received, preparations were made for her transfer from one bed to the other. The corner bed to which she had cast such longing eyes was thoroughly aired, the sheets were warmed at the infirmary fire, and finally, with the assistance of the prisoners, she was removed in her blankets, and in her recumbent position, to the bed which she had so ardently coveted.

"There, Jones, now you feel comfortable and happy, I hope?"

She lay and reflected upon that point for an instant, then suddenly burst out with—

"No, I ain't happy."

"Why, what is the matter now?"

"It's a hard bed. It's not half so good a bed as the other."

"They are all the same, Jones, I assure you."

"As if I didn't know, now I've tried 'em both!"

"And your baby will be quite safe now—if it lies nearest the wall."

"I'm not so sure that it won't get smothered there!"

Being still inclined to express her dissatisfaction, it was judged the wiser course to leave her to herself, and allow her to cool down by degrees. But she was not inclined to cool; she had gained her end, and the result was still extremely dissatisfactory—the corner bed was not to her mind, and she repented the removal.

She lay and pondered on the matter for some time; then, full of her new intention,

with a rashness or a madness which only such women are prone to, she caught her baby in her arms, coolly stepped out of bed, and made for the one she had quitted only a short time since. Great was the surprise of the infirmary nurse, upon her return, to find Jones in her old quarters, grinning and triumphant.

"I thought I'd keep to my own bed after all—it was very hard, that corner one!"

Jones nearly paid the penalty of her rashness by an untimely end; in the course of a few hours, it was doubtful whether the shock to her system would ever be recovered from. On the confines of life and death, she lingered many days, only the greatest care and watchfulness bringing her round at last.

When a little better, the ruling passion set in again—the effects of her own obstinacy had taught her no lesson. She was accustomed to sulk, and refuse her food, if certain extra privileges were not conceded, and in her delicate state of health it became necessary to allow

her everything that she desired. When she was stronger, she spoke of making a nice cap for her infant to be christened in, and seemed wondrously softened by the matron promising to work her a cap by way of a christening present.

And in due course the cap was presented to Jones, who took it with a quiet "thank you," and proceeded to give it a very careful and critical inspection after the matron had retired.

"And she calls this a cap!" was her disparaging remark; "and this is the thing that I was to wait for, and my baby was to be christened in! Blest if it shall!"

A woman who listened to this tirade thought it was a very pretty cap, and in somewhat plain language expressed her opinion of Jones's ingratitude.

"The cap's not good enough for *my* child," cried Jones, indignantly; "why should my child be made a Guy Fox of with this thing?"

"It might wear it for once. It looks so to make a fuss about a present."

"Just look here now: this is what I think of *her* present!"

And the baby's cap, that had been offered in much kindness of heart, and received with such unthankfulness, was thrown into the infirmary fire.

Whether a cap whose texture and style were more befitting Jones's infant adorned it on its day of christening, I have no opportunity of placing here on record.

CHAPTER XVII.

FULHAM REFUGE.

When a matron shall write her life and experience at Fulham Refuge, it is possible that her story will take shades less deep and dark. It may include stories of a fair repentance and a new life, with much to encourage the philanthropist, and to maintain our faith in the grand old adage that there is "good in everything." It will be a record of experience with the best class of prison women, with

those who have been selected from Brixton for evincing some desire to walk in a different path, and to turn away from that which led them to the brink of ruin. It is not to be wondered at that in my chronicles I have shown so little of the bright side, the best prisoners constantly and regularly passing away from our observation.

So much has been said in previous pages concerning Fulham Refuge, that a little sketch concerning it and its discipline may not be considered out of place. Fulham is the last stage of female prison life. Having followed through two phases pretty closely, we can now afford the time to take a cursory glance of that institution which offers so many advantages to those willing to receive them.

It is almost unnecessary to repeat that Millbank Prison represents the probation and third class stage or discipline, and Brixton the first and second. Only women of the first class, strong, industrious, well-behaved prisoners, who have received but a few reports during a long term of imprisonment, and have shown symptoms

of a desire to lead a new life, are eligible for Fulham. As its name implies, it is scarcely a gaol; it is the neutral ground between prison life and the world wherein lurk all the old temptations to which offenders formerly succumbed, and thus became exposed to punishment. It is, moreover, the vantage ground from which may be seen a fairer landscape than women who have been benighted all their lives could have anticipated—where the sun is rising and shedding its light and warmth upon a path which it is in a prisoner's power to follow if she possesses the inclination.

Fulham Refuge was established on the 8th of May, 1856, for the reception of the better class of prisoners. It was not opened as a refuge or a prison, until attempts to procure the aid of private charities already established in many parts of England had failed. It was considered that there would ever exist in the public mind an insuperable objection to taking women as servants from a Government establishment itself—an objection that I believe is every day becoming less

formidable. Will it be remembered by a generous public that no woman is recommended for a servant whose character has not borne a rigid test, and whose chances of proving honest and faithful are not in her favour?

The establishment at Fulham appears to me the wisest step forward in the true track of prison discipline that has hitherto been made. The better class prisoners at Brixton look forward to it as to a rise in life, and work diligently for the privilege of a transmission thither. It might be on a larger scale; it might open its doors to women over forty years of age with some advantage; it might not exclude the sick and feeble—who may be the best class of prisoners, too—from sharing its advantages. If a reward is offered for diligence and good conduct, by the laws of equality every deserving prisoner has a claim thereto, I think.

Still, Fulham Refuge is but a small institution yet, and it only professes "to establish a sound reformatory discipline, combined with such an amount of industrial training as will fit the majority of the females for entering on an honest course of life."

It is intended to constitute, as far as practicable, the *intermediate condition* between close imprisonment and liberty, or ticket-of-leave, in which, "under qualified restraint," the women may be trained to "occupations of industry, the produce of which would partly pay for their support, while the habits which such occupations would create would tend to put the women in the way to earn their livelihood honestly, after being finally discharged."*

The accommodation for prisoners is limited—the daily average, during the year 1860, being one hundred and seventy-four. And when it is remembered that the number of female convicts under Government supervision is 1283, that many of the best class of prisoners are, for many reasons, disqualified from being passed to Fulham at all, the per-centage of this better sort is not a small one.

It must be stated, however, that there *are* disappointments in the moral progress of the prisoners—that the weak will give way, and sink

* Mr. Waddington's letter to Sir Joshua Jebb, K.C.B., in November, 1853.

back into the old crimes; that the woman who has made much profession of "good works" will suddenly fling off the mask, and dishearten those who have been hopeful of her; that much kindness and Christian charity have been often expended in vain, and the old return of ingratitude has proved the only fruit. There are many exceptions however, it is satisfactory to add; and throughout the reports of the lady-superintendent and chaplain of the Refuge there is evident satisfaction with present results, and hope and confidence in the greater progress awaiting them in the future.

The prisoners are well treated at Fulham Refuge; more liberty is allowed them than at the other prisons; there are constant association and better diet, and locking-up and unlocking are chiefly confined to the outer gates.

The principal employment is laundry work, but the making of under-clothing, window-curtains, &c., &c., is not discouraged. The principal profit is derived from establishment and private washing; the far-fetched, cruel practice of endeavouring to make prisons self-supporting flourishing here as

elsewhere. The receipts from private washing amounted, in 1860, to nine hundred and fifty seven pounds, four shillings, and twopence—not a large amount in itself towards the liquidation of the expenses of the establishment, but a serious sum deducted from the earnings of honest laundresses struggling for existence in the neighbourhood.

The routine of the prison is as follows:—At a quarter to six the prisoners rise, dress and make their beds; at a quarter past six the labour of the day begins, and continues till half-past seven, when half an hour is allowed for breakfast. At eight o'clock there is general exercise till nine, at which time the women are rung in to prayers. At half-past nine, when prayers are over, labour begins again—laundry work and needlework until the dinner-hour at one. An hour is allowed for dinner, and an hour afterwards for further exercise, and then from three to five the usual work again. Thirty-five minutes are then devoted to prayers; supper is served at five-and-twenty to six; labour commences for the third time at a quarter past six, and lasts till eight. At eight all work ceases,

and three quarters of an hour are allowed for reading, conversation, &c. At nine the key is turned for the night, and the day's work is over.

Fifteen hours and a quarter form, therefore, the working day of a prisoner and a prison matron—work that is cheerfully performed by each prisoner and officer; and which, considering the anxiety of supervision, and the less restraint to which prisoners are subject, is a trifle more arduous for the latter.

The subjoined interesting tables of prisoners' treatment, for 1859 and 1860, I extract from the report of the lady-superintendent of Fulham Refuge. They present a record of progress, for it must be understood that the *daily* average of prisoners during 1860 was in excess of five over that of 1859:—

1859.		
Prisoners reported	96	
Number of reports	161	
Not reported		192
Number of prisoners punished . .	62	
Number of punishments . . .	82	
Not punished		226

1860.

Number of women reported . .	96	
Number of reports	143	
Not reported		219
Number punished	41	
Number of punishments . . .	57	
Number not punished . . .		274

These women who are not punished are the source of much encouragement to perseverance in the good work commenced. They are industrious; many of them are anxious about the future—which way they shall turn when the liberty day comes?—who will help them, and place confidence in them once again? A great number apply of their own free will for the good words of the lady-superintendent to find them a place in the Prisoners' Aid Society—or "The Home," as that valuable adjunct to our Government prisons is termed by the female convicts. During the year 1860, no less than forty-one women went of their own free will and accord to this "Home," the majority of whom procured situations thence, and are believed to be doing well. Here is the account furnished by the Reverend Mr. Innes to the Directors of Prisons, of twenty-four women

who left Fulham for the Prisoners' Aid, in 1859.

Out of the twenty-four there is but one bad case—the remaining twenty-three are accounted for in this manner:—

Emigrated to Australia	1
Gone to their friends with good characters	4
Lost sight of, but has a good character	1
Out of service at present, but had a good character	1
Believed to be in service	1
Doing well in service	11
Doing well in earning their own livelihood	2
Still in the Society's lodging	2
	23

The Reverend J. Innes adds:—

"This account is very satisfactory, and amongst these cases are some that most strikingly prove the inestimable advantage of timely assistance rendered on first discharge from prison, without which the future of many would have been at least doubtful, who are now acting most creditably, and have entered on a course of honest employment."

Of the religious and moral condition of the prisoners, the chaplain of Fulham speaks at length.

So much true thought and feeling are expressed that I should not be doing justice to my subject were I to omit his own observations on the progress of these prisoners. It is the last stage of prison life, and he speaks hopefully and eloquently:—

"The religious and moral condition of the prisoners generally during the past year has been, on the whole, very satisfactory and hopeful. Changes are, indeed, continually taking place, from the discharge of some women and the admission of others. The character of our community is thus altered from time to time, and we cannot but regret the withdrawal of one and another, who had become unusually steady, and had begun to exert a good influence on others around them. But still I hope we progress. Ground once gained, amongst the women, by the prevalence of a spirit of steadiness and sobriety and earnestness, is not lost, but tells favourably upon the next generation, who supply the places of those who have left.

"Our great object is to raise the women up in the social scale, as respects personal character and

aspirations. In proportion as they acquire and cherish *self-respect*, will they be respected by others, and helped forward in future endeavours to lead an honest and steady life. And there is no feature so striking or obvious in the career of our women, while in the Refuge, as this increase of self-respect. They often seem to be quite different persons, when they come to be discharged, to what they were when they first came to Fulham; and if the improvement is so great, even while they are here, how far greater the change from what they were at the commencement of their imprisonment, and before any portion of the softening, and civilizing, and enlightening influences of the present system of convict discipline had been brought to bear upon them."

From my own knowledge of many of these prisoners' antecedents—from the opportunities that have been presented to me, and others like me, for watching step by step the progress from Millbank to Brixton, and from Brixton to Fulham—I venture to predict results far more satisfactory than prison reports have hitherto laid before the

Houses of Parliament, "by command of Her Majesty." Fulham Refuge is in its infancy yet; I believe it is an establishment that must grow, and eventually become a central point of attraction to all connected with or interested in prison management. The practice of kindness and encouragement must infallibly bear good fruit; fresh experiments, possibly further concessions will be attemped, and found successful; from the Refuge, as well as from the Prisoners' Aid Society, good and faithful servants will be sought and obtained. When it is shewn to these erring sisters of ours that the way to right is not so difficult, and that the way to wrong ends only in shame and ruin—(there are many, it is implied by the chaplain, who are scarcely able to distinguish the difference between vice and virtue yet) —that there are hearts that beat for them, and lips to pray for them, and hands to help them, when they begin their pilgrimage anew; that their past life was a mistake, and the future, stretching beyond, may, by their own efforts, be so much more bright; when the example of those who have gone before is offered

for their guidance on the path which will then have been rendered a beaten track by the constant succession of those treading in it, there will be no guessing the illimitable good to follow the noble thought which gave rise to Fulham Refuge.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—A LITTLE PRISON MELODRAMA.

THE facts of the case I am about to place before the reader are so much out of the common way of prison life, that I have for a long time hesitated whether to state them, or to leave them, fragments of an untold story, in the mists to which they have receded. It is a story that, to spare the feelings of those still living, I find it necessary to enshroud in much of that mystery

which appears to me objectionable, using for my purpose those fictitious names, places, positions and dates which go so far to invalidate fair testimony. Why I have wrapped a cloak of secrecy around my principal actors the reader will guess before the chapter closes; sufficient, perhaps, for me to state that the incidents of this tale are true—strictly true to the letter. It is an old story, or rather, I should say, a simple narrative of facts. As such I will relate it, keeping clear of any temptation to colour too highly a single portion of it.

Nestling amongst the Welsh mountains was situated a little village, the inhabitants of which adopted most of the primitive habits natural to people isolated from the turmoil of cities. A quiet, inoffensive, religious circle of inhabitants, amongst whom crime was almost unknown, and to whom an evening stroll in the valley, or along the mountain side, with service at intervals in the Methodist chapel, formed the only change from the labour of the week. They were mostly poor villagers, but they were honest, God-fearing, simple-hearted peo-

ple, who brought up their children to follow in their steps, and showed them, to the best of their ability, the way they should go.

It was the teaching they had themselves learned from their forefathers; it had brought with it that grace which is "necessary to salvation," and they taught their children it. A few of the inhabitants of this village were of a class in easier circumstances than those around them; holding little tracts of land in the valley, and able to boast of the possession of a cow, a pig, or half a dozen sheep. Amongst these well-to-do people was a family that I will designate by the name of Ellis —an honest, hard-working family, the head of which had saved a little money, was a careful, almost a penurious man, and the owner of a very humble farm. The family consisted of Ellis, his wife, and daughter; the daughter a tall, graceful, warm-hearted Welsh girl, a comfort to her mother in her declining years—a secret pride to the father, who was not of a demonstrative nature, and made no parade of his affection.

It reads very much like a novel to state that "a mysterious stranger"—common to so many fictions—made his appearance in this primitive retreat, accompanied by another friend, on a tourist excursion through North Wales. The travellers took apartments at the only inn in the village, and amused themselves for several days wandering about the mountain glens and valleys, fishing in the rapid stream, or sketching those little picturesque nooks in which Wales abounds, and which are so dear to an artist's eye. At this village the travellers separated, the elder starting homewards, the younger remaining at the inn. The innkeeper, I believe, was a relation of the Ellis family, who were Methodists, and Jane Ellis, the daughter, was accustomed to visit her friends or relatives at the inn wherein the young tourist took his ease. Here a chance acquaintance sprung up—if there be any *chance* in meetings that influence our after life so much either for better or worse—between Jane Ellis and the tourist. It is the old, old story to talk of acquaintance ripening into friendship, and friendship into love—of the affections of this Welsh maiden turning

naturally to one who paid her much attention, and whose polished manners afforded so great a contrast to those of the rustic youths who had been smitten by her charms. The cruel old story of woman's love and man's fancy for a fleeting day or two—of the woman's trust and man's awful selfishness and crime.

After a month's further idling amongst the Welsh mountains, the tourist took his departure for London, with a hundred promises of a speedy return to claim Jane Ellis for his wife. The latter built upon that promise as one builds upon the hope of a life which, sinking away, must leave behind it shame and desolation; but the days and months passed, and the tourist never returned.

Then the whole story began to spread from one honest house to another, and whispers to circulate, and the finger of scorn to be pointed at her—a Welsh girl!—who had let the stranger overcome her with his false vows and lying promises. There was a greater shame to come, and the father, I have already said, was a stern man, who had known no dis-

grace, and could not brook it in any of his family. Rigid sectarians are prone to harshness, and the full force of the paternal wrath fell upon the head of Jane Ellis.

Jane remained hopeful long after all others were fully convinced of the studied duplicity of her deceiver. It was not till her father had made a journey to London, and discovered how false had been all the young man's statements with reference to his home, his friends and relations, that she became fully alive to the horrors of the position into which her own folly had brought her. Home became distasteful to her; the mother was an invalid, whom the shock of her daughter's shame had seriously affected; the father continued hard and unyielding, and as he would have no mercy, Jane Ellis ran away from home.

Is not this the old story still? How often in works of fiction, and how much more often in real life, does the daughter run away from home to ruin! How many times also does it occur, in prison experience, that a woman, in her fitful gleams of repentance, will bemoan the step that

took her away from home in the days of her wilfulness and perversity!

It would be a painful task to trace minutely the further career of Ellis; to dwell on each temptation that lured her farther away from right and truth. The decisive step had been taken; there was no turning back—or perhaps she no longer chose to return—God knows! Presently her only refuge was—the streets! So, from bad to worse—struggling to drown thought—struggling to live, she was finally apprehended on some petty charge of larceny. Imprisonment for that offence was followed by wilder licence—ending, to make matters short, with a sentence of penal servitude, and her arrival at Millbank Prison.

Here began the prison matron's acquaintance with her—here Jane Ellis proved with what frightful celerity it is possible to retrograde from moral rectitude, until no semblance of the early nature was left to know her by. She showed herself one of the vicious, ungovernable class of prisoners, resisting restraint and prison discipline, and defying both to the utmost of her power. She passed through penal class wards, refractory cells,

and "darks," she wore the hand-cuff and the prison jacket, and her life was that of the worst of women, her character that of the worst of prisoners.

Her health began to be affected by constant "breakings out;" when quietly disposed and for a certain time restored to her ward, she was allowed as a favour the privilege of having the inner door open and the iron grating left as a screen between her and the wards. At this grating she was accustomed to sit and work—if in an agreeable mood, to watch for the smile of the matron, for whom she evinced occasionally a certain amount of affection.

One day visitors were expected at the prison; when they arrived, they were escorted round the wards in the usual manner. The gentlemen were more interested in minor details than strangers on a visit to our Government establishments generally are. In due course the ward wherein Jane Ellis was confined was reached. Glancing towards her cell, and perceiving that only one door was secured, in lieu of two, an inquiry was made as to the reason of that cell's being more open than the rest. Suddenly there was a strange silence—a

silence that struck even the matron of the ward with surprise—and the inquiring visitor stood, as rigid as a statue, staring at a face white as death, that glared back at him through the iron grating.

The visitor moved on, asked if the woman were seriously ill, the nature of her sentence, &c., and then passed on his tour of inspection, and left the prison shortly afterwards. Presently it was noticed that Ellis was still standing at the grated door, as though she had been turned to stone.

"What is the matter, Ellis?" asked her matron.

"Who was that man?—what was his name?"

"I do not know. I have not heard."

"Did you see him look at me?"

The matron could but answer in the affirmative.

"Oh! my God, well he might! Miss ——," she cried, in a stifled whisper; "as God's my judge, that was the man who led me first to ruin. Before I knew him, I was an innocent girl!"

She was taciturn the remainder of the day, evinced none of her usual uproariousness and

excitement, and was discovered crying in her cell at supper time. Later that night she asked about the visitor again, and, after a little pressing on the part of the matron, related the story which, as briefly as possible, I have already given to the reader.

It was a strange meeting, and a strange meeting-place—and the story was told without any parade of emotion. Ellis behaved in her usual manner after this unexpected event, and only once alluded to it some weeks afterwards.

"Miss ——," she said to the matron to whom she had communicated the story, "what did I tell you about the visitor that day?"

The matron responded briefly, and the prisoner turned almost angrily away.

"Ah! don't say anything about it. P'raps it was all my nonsense, after all."

But prison matrons are used to nonsense, and to stories that have no foundation. There is little doubt that this story was a true one, and the meeting between seducer and victim certainly took place as I have ventured to describe.

Did such a meeting, under such strange cir-

cumstances, work a change in the heart of him who had brought about such evil? To see the sin of his youth perpetuated in such fatal results to one who had been pure and innocent, must surely have been a shock to one endowed with the common feelings of humanity. But there are men in whom all true feeling must be wholly withered, and on whom the shadow of the wrong they have done falls but lightly as they pursue their vicious course. A little start of surprise, a spasm of contrition perhaps, and they are on their downward road again!

CHAPTER XIX.

PRISON STATISTICS.

I HOPE this may be considered the only dry chapter in my book. I have a feminine distaste for figures, and I have put off the evil day till the last. Approaching the completion of my task, it appears to me necessary to lay before the reader a few details gathered from the last report of governors, chaplains, superintendents, &c., occasion-

ally appending thereto my own comments.

There is an interest even in "facts and figures" concerning these poor women, and I am not without a hope that these minute details may prove interesting, even to the reader who has taken up this book solely for amusement. I have attempted to confine myself to those particulars which more immediately bear upon the subject, and have endeavoured to present them clearly and succinctly. Statistics which have already appeared in other portions of this work it will be needless to recapitulate.

There are still only three Government establishments for female convicts—Millbank, Brixton, and Fulham. At the time I write, the prison at Broadmoor, intended for refractory female convicts, is not yet prepared for their reception. In the tabular statements, in which male and female convicts are classed, I have attempted to show at a glance the accommodation available for female prisoners, and the number of women who, at the end of 1860, were confined in the three establishments above mentioned.

Accommodation for female convicts at the disposal of the Government :—

Millbank	550
Brixton	645
Fulham	176
	1,371

Number and disposal of female convicts during the year 1860 :—

Number of Female Convicts in Convict Prisons on January 1, 1860 . . .	1,188
Received during the year 1860 .	531
	1,719
Disposed of during the year	436
Remaining on December 31st, 1860	1,283

Thus it will be seen that the female convict population presses rather closely on the space allotted to them—a fearful little army, which men of thought and heart are ever studying to reduce. Amongst the columns of statistics it stands as a grim, suggestive fact that there is but a balance of *eighty-eight* between the space at the disposition of the Government and the numbers for whom that space is necessary.

From a tabular account, carefully prepared by Major-General Sir Joshua Jebb, K.C.B., Chairman of the Directors, we are enabled to perceive the progress of the ticket-of-leave system, against which so much outcry has been raised. A few extracts therefrom may not be out of place. The orders of licence commenced in October, 1853, and the working is traced to April, 1861. The following may be taken as a brief epitome of the whole :—

	Female Convicts Licensed.	Revoked.	Reconvicted.	Total.
From Oct., 1853, to Dec. 31, 1854,	40	2	1	3
1855,	115	18	14	32
1856,	221	33	30	63
1857,	55	7	7	14
1858,	18	—	2	2
1859,	29	1	1	2
1860,	183	4	8	12
To June, 1861,	102	—	2	2

This marks progress in the right direction, and shows that the per-centage of returns is not a large one, after all. Still, it is fair to ask the question—if the women who have been apprehended for fresh offences under different names, and who are sometimes not recognized as old

offenders until received by the prison matrons, are finally registered in the chronicle as "returns"?*

The following table, extracted from the appendix to Sir Joshua Jebb's memorandum, in Report for 1860, will show "the number of months and the proportions of sentences which may be remitted as a reward for good conduct and willing industry":—

Sentence to Penal Servitude for	May be Remitted on Good Conduct	Term to be undergone.	Proportion which may be Remitted.
3 yrs. . .	6 mths.	2 yrs. & 6 mths.	One-sixth.
4 ,, . .	9 ,,	3 yrs. & 3 mths.	One-fifth.
5 ,, . .	12 ,,	4 yrs.	Ditto.
6 ,, . .	18 ,,	4 yrs. & 6 mths.	One-fourth.
7 ,, . .	21 ,,	5 yrs. & 3 mths.	Ditto.
8 ,, . .	24 ,,	6 yrs.	Ditto.
10 ,, . .	30 ,,	7 yrs. & 6 mths.	Ditto.
12 ,, . .	36 ,,	9 yrs.	Ditto.
15 yrs. and upwards .	—	—	One-third.

Sentences for life are considered by the Secretary of State according to the peculiar nature of each case.

* The re-convictions of female convicts are set down at eight and a half per cent. only in seven years and eight months, and the revocations of licence in about an equal proportion.

Passing over various statistics, of no particular interest to the general community, it may be amusing to cull from the last report a few figures concerning the conduct of female prisoners at Millbank and Brixton. At Millbank, out of 880 *ordinary female prisoners*, 188 have been punished and 52 admonished for various offences during the year; the remaining 640 have not been reported at all. Altogether it appears that there were 1,134 offences, 72 of which were met by the punishment of bread and water, and 235 by admonition. Only 37 cases of destruction of prison property appear in the last report.

The above does not include any facts relating to penal class women, whose actions are thus summed up:—

48 prisoners have been treated in the penal class. Of these 12 have not been reported, 5 are pronounced good, 4 indifferent, and 27 bad. The array of figures against these twenty-seven speaks of many stormy scenes, and of much anxiety and harass to the matrons in charge. These women, it appears, have incurred no less than 446

reports, for acts for the most part of a desperate character. 128 acts of destruction to prison property were perpetrated by them.

Of the nature of the different punishments in 1860, a tabular form for each female prison has been prepared, of which the following is a copy :—

Return of Punishments and Admonitions of Female Convicts in Millbank Prison for the Year 1860.

Nature of Punishment.	Adults.														Juveniles.									General Total.
	Days.										Three Months.	One Meal.	Admonished.	Total.	Days.						One Meal.	Admonished.	Total.	
	1	2	3	7	8	10	14	21	28	56					1	2	3	14	28	56				
In Handcuffs	26	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	26	10	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10	36
In Strait Jacket	96	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	96	5	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	101
In Canvas Dress	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	16	...	...	16	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	17
In Dark Cells (With Rations Bread and Water)	1	2	48	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	51	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	51
	16	35	84	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	135	1	2	3	...	...	...	...	...	6	141
In Refractory Cells (Reduced Diet Bread and Water Diet)	...	...	1	2	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
	9	14	6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	29	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	30
On Bread and Water Diet	45	17	28	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	90	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	2	92
Indian Meal Punishment Diet	...	...	...	1	1	3	17	11	28	36	...	...	...	92	...	...	...	1	2	2	...	...	5	97
Bread and Water for Dinner (1 day)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	67	...	67	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	...	5	72
Admonished and not punished	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	471	471	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	22	22	493
Total	193	68	167	3	1	3	17	11	24	36	16	67	471	1,077	17	2	6	1	2	2	5	22	57	1,134

RETURN of PUNISHMENTS of FEMALE CONVICTS in Brixton Prison during the Year 1860.

NATURE OF PUNISHMENT.	Less than One Day.	No. of Days.									TOTAL.
		1	2	3	7	10	14	16	21	28	
In Strait Waistcoat	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Refractory Cell — Full rations . .	...	63	96	60	...	1	9	...	8	31	268
Refractory Cell — Bread and water .	...	23	17	48	...	...	...	...	...	...	88
Refractory Cell — Do. on alternate days	...	...	10	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	14
Refractory Cell — Indian meal diet .	...	...	...	...	1	2	3	2	2	15	25
On bread and water diet . . .	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Deprived of a meal or part of a meal .	218	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	218
Total	219	88	123	108	1	3	12	2	10	50	616

RETURN of PUNISHMENTS of FEMALE CONVICTS at Fulham Refuge for the year 1860.

NATURE OF PUNISHMENT.	Less than One Day.	Days.			Admonished or Reprimanded and removed from Active Employment.	Reduced to Lower Class.
		1	2	3		
Kept in their rooms	...	2	...	...	86	...
Kept in cell during exercise hours .	...	...	...	...	...	...
Separation without dinner . .	...	5	...	...	...	...
Separation on full diet	...	8	...	...	...	...
Bread and water in light cell . . .	1	3	3	1	...	...
Bread and water in dark cell . . .	4	...	...	...	...	...
Special diet . . .	...	2	16	12	...	...
Total . . .	5	20	19	13	86	

The returns for 1860, showing the number of prisoners reported and those not reported, also afford very curious information respecting the dogged persistency in evil courses of many of those characters whom I have sketched in other portions of this work. The relative proportion between the good and bad prisoners is on the right side, and therefore satisfactory; but the bad are "very bad," as may be seen by the register of their shortcomings below. The reader will perceive that

there are women at Millbank Prison who have been punished thirty-two, forty-seven, and *fifty-five* times, in even less than a single year.

RETURN showing the NUMBER of FEMALE PRISONERS REPORTED, and those NOT REPORTED, from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1860.

In the Prison, January 1, 1860				391
52	of these prisoners reported	once,		52
25	,, ,,	twice,		50
9	,, ,,	thrice,		27
6	,, ,,	4 times,		24
3	,, ,,	5	,,	15
3	,, ,,	6	,,	18
1	,, ,,	7	,,	7
5	,, ,,	8	,,	40
1	,, ,,	9	,,	9
3	,, ,,	10	,,	30
1	,, ,,	11	,,	11
2	,, ,,	12	,,	24
1	,, ,,	13	,,	13
2	,, ,,	14	,,	28
1	,, ,,	15	,,	15
1	,, ,,	17	,,	17
1	,, ,,	18	,,	18
1	,, ,,	19	,,	19
1	,, ,,	23	,,	23
1	,, ,,	24	,,	24
1	,, ,,	32	,,	32
1	,, ,,	47	,,	47
122	reported.			543
Deduct 32	not punished.			
Total, 90	punished, 301 not punished.			

Prisoners received during the year 1860 . .				549
74	of these prisoners reported	once,		74
41	„	„	twice,	82
18	„	„	thrice,	54
7	„	„	4 times,	28
3	„	„	5 „	15
4	„	„	6 „	24
1	„	„	7 „	7
4	„	„	9 „	36
2	„	„	11 „	22
1	„	„	13 „	13
1	„	„	17 „	17
1	„	„	18 „	18
1	„	„	30 „	30
1	„	„	31 „	31
1	„	„	40 „	40
1	„	„	45 „	45
1	„	„	55 „	55
162 reported.				591
Deduct 20 not punished.			Total,	940
142 punished, 407 not punished.				
Total, 232 punished, 708 not punished.				
			General Total,	1,134

The statistics of Brixton Prison show a less formidable array of figures against the refractory

women; the discipline is less severe, and a serious breach thereof sends the prisoner back to Millbank. No fair comparison, therefore, can be instituted between Brixton and Millbank reports. The maximum number of reports obtained by a prisoner was 35 in twelve months—26 and 20 reports during the year were respectively obtained by two other women. Many were reported five, six, and seven times—not a large number for women of this character.

It is but fair to state that there are women in Brixton Prison (who, for various reasons, are ineligible for Fulham) who in the course of seven years' incarceration, have not incurred a single report. Their conduct, it is added, "is ever quiet, orderly, and consistent, in all respects, with true reformation." Surely such women deserve an intermediate system, a further leave and license, as fairly as those prisoners whose good fortune it is to be younger and stronger? In Brixton Prison there were no less than 649 prisoners who incurred not a single report during the year 1860.

The Millbank Prison report, for the same year, furnishes us with an interesting table, in which the

age, sentence, and religious persuasion of each convict, male and female, is stated. It appears to be an omission not to furnish a similar report from the Surrey prison.

In Millbank we learn that, during the year 1860, there were fifteen women under seventeen years of age, five hundred and thirty-four who were seventeen years and upwards, one hundred and thirty-one between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one, two hundred and twenty-one between twenty-one and thirty, and one hundred and eighty-two of thirty years and upwards. There is a separate class, termed juveniles, whose ages, during 1860, varied from fourteen to seventeen—the number of this latter class was fifteen. The extent of sentence is worth recording. In 1860, there were two hundred and six prisoners with three years sentence, two hundred and twenty-five with four years', forty-three with five years', thirty-seven with six years', ten with seven years', two with eight years', four with ten years', one with twelve years', three with fifteen years', and three unfortunates with life sentences.

From the separate register of the Juveniles—the

saddest statistics that can be presented by a Government—we learn the sentences of the fifteen rash, ill-educated children recently mentioned. It appears that there were six serving a three years' sentence, the same number a four years', one under sentence for five years, one for six years, and one—saddest and grimmest fact of all this terrible array of figures—*sentenced for life!*

The religious persuasion of the prisoners was as follows at Millbank in 1860:—

Church of England . . .	374
Church of Rome . . .	151
Dissenters and others . .	23
Hebrew Persuasion . . .	1

Almost the last item in the Governor's report calls attention to the fact against which I have more than once protested. "50,822 shirts have been made for a City firm, without a single shirt being rejected for inferior workmanship!!"

Into the exact nature of the work performed by the female convicts at Millbank, the following summary affords an insight:—

FEMALE PRISONERS.

NEEDLE-WOMEN, &c.:—		
Drawers, flannel	No.	358
Shirts, prison	„	2,934
Stays	„	490
Caps, women's	„	1,696
Jackets	„	1,073
Petticoats	„	1,921
Shifts	„	881
Aprons	„	942
Handkerchiefs and neckerchiefs hemmed	„	292
Towels	„	44
Cases, bed and pillow	„	118
Dresses, uniform (females')	„	
Mantles, do.	„	73
Vecunia cloaks, do.	„	7
Night gowns, infirmary	„	60
Stockings, knitted	Pairs	27
Shirts, liberty	No.	60
Dresses, do.	„	12
Articles, miscellaneous	„	163
Shirts, sheets, &c., &c., for City houses	„	53,647
PICKERS:—		
Coir	Lbs.	13,849
BAGMAKERS:—		
Bags mended for a City firm	No.	96,541
LAUNDRY-WOMEN:—		
Articles washed	„	163,834

The work performed at Brixton Prison may be here contrasted with that of Millbank; it must be remembered that the working hours are less than at Millbank, owing to the number of invalids and the increased time allowed for exercise.

STATEMENT OF ESTABLISHMENT WORK performed at Brixton Prison, from the 1st January to the 31st December, 1860.

	ARTICLES.	No.
1	Cotton shirts	14,248
2	Flannel „	2,216
3	„ vests	1,610
4	„ drawers	5,893
5	„ shifts	2,031
6	„ petticoats	1,049
7	Hose	408
8	Bonnets	752
9	Cotton shifts	1,796
10	Table-cloths	20
11	Night-caps	356
12	Serge jackets	1,303
13	„ skirts	1,427
14	Washing frocks	452
15	Marking articles	669
16	Cotton dresses	504

17	Aprons	1,947
18	Badges	1,470
19	Handkerchiefs	10,037
20	Neckerchiefs	9,192
21	Sheets	1,244
22	Linsey petticoats	2,215
23	Day caps	1,299
24	Towels	370
25	Bonnets trimmed	49
26	Black stuff petticoats	402
27	Stays	953
28	Hammock girths	373
29	Pillow cases	40
30	Letter bags	426
31	Coverlets	17
32	Laundry bags	212
33	Men's caps	1,008
34	Serge shoes	63
35	Repairs (sundry)	—

Children's Clothing:—

1	Frocks	6
2	Pinafores	6
3	Flannel petticoats	6
4	Linsey do.	6
5	Flannel shirts	6
6	Cotton do.	6
7	Night gowns	6
8	Diapers	24

1	Officers' uniform	dresses	. . . .	59
2	do.	do.	jackets	39
3	do.	do.	bonnets	27
4	do.	do.	cloaks	11
5	do.	do.	skirts	11
6	do.	do.	aprons	1

PRIVATE WORK.

Articles.

		No.
1	Shirts	30,423
2	Drawers	100
3	Chemises	132
4	Dresses	97
5	Night gowns	118
6	Jackets	34
7	Carpets	1
8	Binding curtains	1
9	Trimming dresses	3
10	Repairs	312
11	Collars and cuffs	24
12	Coats turned	3
13	Caps	24
14	Petticoats	101
15	Embroidery pieces	116
16	Frocks	18
17	Crochet caps	20
18	Sleeves	18

19	Slip bodies	25
20	Antimacassars	5
21	Trimming bonnets	33
22	Trousers	12
23	Waistcoats	18
24	Duck slops	1,809
25	Dress skirts	35
26	Mantles	13
27	Handkerchiefs	10
28	Pinafores	10
29	Bonnet fronts	4
30	Neckerchiefs	6
31	Towels	15
32	Collars	32
33	Petticoat bodies	4
34	Marking handkerchiefs	14
35	Embroidering do.	4
36	Rosettes	1
37	Aprons	2
38	Gaiters	3
39	Habit shirts	6
40	Covers	1
41	Marking articles	10
42	Night caps	7
43	Curtains	7
44	Flannel vests	3
45	Window blinds	1
46	Chair covers	4
47	Lining a muff	1

WASHING.

	Scores.
Establishment	16,013--10
Millbank	12,245
Pentonville	7,110
Private parties (single articles) . .	3,338 doz.

To a few medical statistics, &c., I have already drawn attention in my chapter on prison infirmaries; bristling through the reports of Governors, Directors, &c., there are still phalanxes of figures, which I need not dwell upon in this place.

It may be a feature of interest to see at a glance what are the relative expenses of our female prisons—what female ignorance, and passion, and crime cost a nation! In the account of expenditure at Millbank Prison, one-half, or five-eighths of the total may be very fairly deducted for the men's side.

STATEMENT showing the Expenditure of Millbank Prison for the year ending 31st March, 1861.

	£	s.	d.
Salaries of principal officers and clerks	4,586	15	6
Wages of subordinate officers and servants	5,890	6	2
Gratuities to officers	254	14	6
Salaries and wages of manufacturing or labour department . . .	1,985	11	3

	£	s.	d.
Rations for officers, and allowance in lieu thereof	1,390	1	11
Uniforms for officers and servants	421	17	3
Victualling prisoners	8,059	3	0
Clothing, &c., for prisoners	2,278	9	3
Bedding for prisoners	224	5	2
Medicines, surgical instruments, &c.	392	18	0
Medical comforts (extras for sick)	316	16	3
Clothing and travelling expenses of prisoners on their liberation	220	2	6
Gratuities to convicts*	2,430	8	11
Furniture and fittings	332	7	4
Kitchen utensils, crockery, cutlery, &c.	61	19	10
Fuel and light for general purposes	2,035	2	10
Buildings, hulks, and ordinary repairs	865	7	3
Soap, scouring, and cleaning articles	566	7	7
Brushes, brooms, and mops	182	3	4
Funeral expenses, inquests, &c.	8	10	0
Various small disbursements	254	7	2
Rent, rates, and taxes	310	16	5
Total	33,098	11	5
Deduct—Amount of sundry receipts and value of productive labour	2,436	18	10
Net expenditure	30,661	12	7

* The gratuities to male convicts, ot Millbank Prison, are very large in comparison with those of the female prisoners.

STATEMENT showing the Expenditure of Brixton Prison, for the year ending 31st March, 1861.

	£	s.	d.
Salaries of principal officers and clerks .	2,291	0	10
Wages of subordinate officers and servants	1,976	13	1
Salaries and wages of manufacturing or labour department	658	0	10
Rations for officers, and allowances in lieu thereof	547	13	6
Uniforms for officers and servants .	139	2	5
Victualling prisoners	5,455	15	10
Clothing, &c., for prisoners . . .	1,742	3	6
Bedding for prisoners	334	15	7
Medicines, surgical instruments, &c. .	177	16	4
Medical comforts (extra for sick) .	386	7	11
Clothing and travelling expenses of prisoners on their liberation . . .	964	15	8
Gratuities to convicts	1,083	1	10
Furniture and fittings	231	15	9
Kitchen utensils, crockery, cutlery, &c.	92	14	2
Fuel and light for general purposes .	1,296	8	11
Buildings, and ordinary repairs . .	495	3	7
Soap, scouring, and cleaning articles .	566	3	7
Brushes, brooms, and mops . . .	47	6	0
Funeral expenses, inquests, &c. . .	25	6	0
Various small disbursements . .	518	5	4
Rent, rates, and taxes . . .	168	18	9
Total . .	19,181	9	5
Deduct—Amount of sundry receipts and value of productive labour .	979	4	4
Net expenditure	18,202	5	1

STATEMENT showing the Expenditure of Fulham Refuge, from the 1st April, 1860, to 31st March, 1861.

	£	s.	d.
Salaries of principal officers and clerks .	1,152	10	0
Wages of subordinate officers and servants	590	17	10
Rations for officers, and allowances in lieu thereof	124	16	2
Uniforms for officers and servants .	58	18	0
Victualling prisoners	1,775	12	2
Clothing, &c., for prisoners . . .	590	17	8
Bedding for prisoners	5	13	6
Medicines, surgical instruments, &c. .	38	3	1
Medical comforts (extras for sick) .	5	4	9
Clothing and travelling expenses of prisoners on their liberation . . .	517	3	10
Gratuities to convicts	958	6	4
Furniture and fittings	100	8	5
Kitchen utensils, crockery, cutlery, &c.	35	8	6
Fuel and light for general purposes .	542	7	1
Buildings, hulks, and ordinary repairs .	355	0	3
Soap, scouring, and cleaning articles .	262	10	4
Brushes, brooms, and mops . .	21	5	6
Various small disbursements . .	201	8	7
Rent, rates, and taxes	58	3	4
Total . . .	7,394	15	4
Deduct—Amount of sundry receipts and value of productive labour . .	923	14	1
Net expenditure .	6,471	1	3

Total net Expenditure of the three Female Prisons.

	£	s.	d.
Millbank (with say five-eighths of expenses deducted)	11,498	2	2
Brixton	18,202	5	1
Fulham Refuge	6,471	1	3
Total . . .	36,171	8	6

This is my own summary, for which no Governor or Director is responsible; whether five-eighths of expenses be too much to allow for the management of the men's side of the prison, I must leave to those more versed in such matters than myself. It appears to me a fair proportion.

Years hence some future writer on prison subjects may wade through a sea of reports to gather here and there figures similar to these, and institute between this statement and his own a fair comparison. He would be a bold man who ventured to assert what the balance would be between them, and on which side. Population will have increased; but all the philanthropic schemes for the reformation of our female convicts will have had fair play, and been improved upon. Schools and Bible classes are rising every week, and the

army of workers in the good cause numbers each day fresh volunteers, with energy in God's cause, and faith in working for His erring children.

Think of the great balance-sheet to be audited some ten or twenty years hence, and let each man or woman, with power to act and think and feel, strive for a heavy credit account on the right side. The scales *must* turn—shall it be in favour of the Tempter, or of "our Father in Heaven"?

CHAPTER XX.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—LIFE WOMEN.—ELIZABETH HARRIS, HANNAH CURTIS, AND MARY JENNINGS.

Has the reader any remembrance of Elizabeth Harris, I wonder? The facts of her case, and of her trial for the murder of her two children, may linger yet in a few retentive memories. Her trial occurred at the Central Criminal Court, in the month following that of Celestina Sommer; and her reprieve, which was forwarded by the Secretary of State almost at the same period, appeared to give equal dissatisfaction to the

public. There were no valid grounds for the extension of mercy to her—the case being a fearful one, and the crime one that nothing could palliate.

It may be remembered that Elizabeth Harris was only twenty-five years of age at the time of her conviction. She was tried for the murder of her two illegitimate children, on the 9th of May, 1856. It appears that she was proceeding to Portsmouth, to live with the father of her third child, an infant in arms, and did not scruple before her departure coolly to drown the two elder children, Ellen and Agnes, in a river near the railway station.

"They had no father to protect them, and this little one had," she alleged, as her only excuse for the perpetration of the act. Suspicion at the absence of the children with whom she had been seen only a few hours previously, soon led to her arrest, and finally to her trial and sentence of death.

During her trial, Harris was prostrated by terror and grief, and, after the sentence was pronounced, she was led from the dock more dead than alive. The sentence of the

judge was not carried out, as I have already intimated, but commuted to penal servitude for life. Immediately after her respite, she arrived at Millbank Prison.

It may be thought that the conduct of a woman capable of committing such an act would have been, in prison, the reverse of satisfactory; that a nature so passionate and wicked would have chafed against restraint, and the hopelessness of the future. Elizabeth Harris was another of those women who, in captivity for crimes of the deepest dye, become the most quiet and the best behaved of prisoners. As a rule, murderesses are the women most apt to conform to prison discipline, most anxious to gain the goodwill of their officers, and easily swayed by a kind word. They are not, generally, of the lowest grade—that is, not the most illiterate or mentally depraved. The heavy sentence for life appears to weigh them down rather than render them furious with despair; and, possibly, the hope of gaining a pardon some day—even ten, fifteen, twenty years hence!—leads them to make every effort to merit the good conduct badges, &c., which tell so much in

a woman's favour when the year's summing up takes place.

Whether similar motives to these actuated, and are still actuating, Elizabeth Harris, it is impossible to decide; certain it is that during my connection with her, she was one of the best prisoners.

Peacefully disposed, she had no quarrels with her fellow-convicts; she was anxious to work, and to work with satisfaction to her matron; she was ever obedient and civil. She was not a despondent woman—and it is a remarkable fact that with most female convicts the sentence is considered a fair equivalent for the act committed, and they think there is no further occasion to trouble their heads about the matter. "The deed is done," and prison life is penance and absolution for it. Elizabeth Harris was ever a cheerful woman, possessing a brisk step and a bright smile—following the rules and plying her needle industriously.

She was disinclined to the practice of "palling in"; sought no favourites amongst the women, and objected to be sought herself. She was a woman who showed no little real gratitude for any kindness, which she returned

with that irritable, jealous affection common to many prisoners besides herself. This proneness to jealousy was Elizabeth Harris's greatest fault. It annoyed her to hear a single word of kindness addressed to her companions in the ward, and she would take it into her head to maintain a rigid silence for many days after a kind word spoken to another prisoner. She never betrayed passion, or even suffered herself to be led into an insolent demeanour, or give a sharp answer during her brooding fits; but contented herself with dark looks at the woman who had received the envied word or smile, and responded to her matron in brief monosyllables.

When on terms that might be considered friendly with her officer, she often sought an opportunity of relating her own version of the act that had nearly led her to the scaffold—a version that, however little its communication might be desired, would eventually, piece by piece, be fully narrated.

Harris never expressed regret for the murder, so far as my own experience went—such expressions of repentance are naturally listened to more fre-

quently by the chaplains than the matrons. She called the murder "getting into trouble"—a mild way of putting a case, her statement of which was expected to be implicitly believed. Still she might have deeply regretted the crime for which she was suffering penal servitude; she was a thoughtful woman, and read her Bible attentively.

Hannah Curtis stands as another favourable specimen of the class above referred to. A murderess and a life-woman, whose crime was of a cold-blooded description.

The particulars of the case I may briefly recapitulate here. Twelve years have passed since her trial, the details of which lie buried amongst the mass of fresh offences that have followed and submerged her case.

Hannah Curtis stood her trial for murder on the thirteenth of August, 1850, at the Gloucester Assizes. She was fifty-five years old at the time of her husband's death, which, following close upon the purchase of arsenic "for rats," brought upon her the usual suspicions and inquiries. Hannah Curtis, whose name was Harris at the

time of the murder, married, within twenty-six days after it, a person resident in the parish of Frampton Cotterill, where the alleged crime had taken place. This precipitate match led to further inquiries, followed by an exhumation, and the discovery of arsenic in the body of the murdered man, who, it appears, had been under medical treatment a short time before his death. The woman stoutly maintained, as strongly after sentence of death had been passed upon her as before the verdict was given, that the arsenic she had purchased was taken by her husband by mistake for carbonate of soda. It certainly appeared, at the trial, that Harris, himself, had frequently complained of rats, and spoken of purchasing arsenic for their destruction.

Still, the facts were strongly against her, and there was no breaking through the web of circumstantial evidence. Her sentence was, however, commuted to penal servitude for life. At fifty-five years of age this feeble woman, still protesting her innocence, was passed from Gloucester Gaol to the prison at Millbank.

As an inmate of a convict prison, Hannah

Curtis's character shone very brightly, by way of contrast with that of the general body of prisoners. It was difficult for even a prison-matron to imagine that a woman of her appearance and manners could have been led to the perpetration of so heinous a crime. A tall, grey haired woman, looking older than her years, bent nearly double, and leaning on a stick; a woman with a kind, motherly face, that reminded me, at least, of a dear old friend I had then recently lost. A prisoner one took naturally to, and for whom I felt almost unconsciously the respect due from youth to age, until the nature of the crime sent all reverential feeling to the background.

The prisoners also took readily to her, called her "mother," and tried to assist her in various little ways.

"Oh! isn't she like the mother I ran away from twenty years ago!" a prisoner cried once. "I wish," with a little shudder, "they'd put her somewhere else than near to me!"

Curtis, soon after her removal to Brixton, became an inmate of the prison nursery, or

of the convalescent part of it, amusing herself by needlework, by talking to the young mothers and the little children, and giving them that advice for the future regulation of their conduct, which, in her old age, if her sentence was just, she had herself neglected.

Without an angry word, or a gesture of dissatisfaction, Curtis seemed to spend a pleasant time at Brixton Prison; content with her position in society—or away from it—interested in passing events, pleased with the children that her own illness threw her amongst, and quite a mother, in her way, to all with whom she was brought in contact. She was a life-woman, and the sentence—judging by outward appearances, which, however, are ever deceitful—did not affect her.

"It's a very comfortable place," she said, looking round the prison once; "dear heart, who'd a thought of it's being such a comfortable place!"

She soon grew very feeble, moved from room to room with the aid of her stick, and faltered in her gait. She was con-

stant in the discharge of religious duties, evinced an interest in sacred matters, and yet, amidst all this, made no parade of her sentiments, or of a change—if there were a change—in her heart and thoughts.

Becoming almost a confirmed invalid, she expressed once or twice, I believe, a wish to die out of prison, and near those friends and relations from whom she was isolated. Upwards of ten of her declining years had been spent in prison—a dishonourable old age, under which women more sensitive than she would have sunk long ago; it was considered fair and merciful to let her spend her few remaining days apart from prison-life. Strong recommendations as to her orderly conduct, her religious feeling, and her great debility, were forwarded to the Secretary of State, and in due course a free pardon was sent for Hannah Curtis, who quitted the prison, to the great regret of the women who had had any acquaintance with her.

"She was just like a mother to us," one remarked.

"A blessed sight better mother than ever I had the luck of!" was the coarse comment of the prisoner addressed.

The third life-woman on my list, whose name may not be quite unfamiliar to my readers, stands as another instance of the worst criminal often proving herself the best-conducted prisoner.

Mary Jennings was of the quiet order of prisoners—well-ordered and taciturn, yet ever willing to oblige. A woman of a reticent nature, who expressed no emotion, and went about her duties in a business-like manner, and with a grave, earnest face. I have often thought that the nature of her crime, or the heavy sentence which it had incurred, weighed upon her more than such sentences generally do—she preserved so constantly her thoughtful expression of countenance.

Mary Jennings was tried for the attempted murder of her child, some years ago. The case was a bad one, and there were very few extenuating circumstances. It was an act of sheer malice, and the sentence was a well-

deserved one. As in the previous case of Curtis, one could scarcely reconcile the commission of so serious a crime with the calm, equable demeanour of the woman, and that young passive face beneath the prison cap.

Jennings remains still an inmate of Brixton Prison, calmly and gravely fulfilling her allotted tasks, and making no sign, either of remorse for the past, or of horror at the dead blank, which, to women like her, the future must present. Pacing the silent wards, and preserving ever the same inflexible countenance, of what does she think? Shut up in her cell, with the gas turned out, and she apart from the world whose laws she has outraged, is there any change in her, or is it ever the same apathy, which nothing can pierce?

The secrets of all hearts are known only to One eternal watcher. We cannot speculate, we have no right to speculate, on the inner workings of that great mystery—the heart of a woman who has taken the life of one who should have been dear to her.

Jennings is evidently a thoughtful woman;

in the monotony of prison life, and the regular working of its machinery, there is time for much reflection—and, if so disposed, for repentance. Such a past as Jennings's there is no shutting out or escaping from—and facing it ever with that pale, almost sorrowful face, I am inclined to think that, for all the guilty days gone by, the woman feels a deep and a lasting regret. We see "through a glass darkly," but still the shadowy outlines of great truths will loom beyond distinctly.

CHAPTER XXI.

PRISON CHARACTERS.—SARAH FEATHERSTONE, MARY MACLEAN, BUTTERWORTH, MARGARET WILLIAMS, JANE WHITE, BENTON, SUSY DUNN, HONOR MATTHEWS, AMELIA MOTT, MARY ANN SMITH, AND EMILY LAWRENCE.

My lessening space warns me that I must speak but briefly of the remainder of those prison characters concerning whom a few remarks are necessary. Probably this is the better course; there is a similitude in prison portraiture, and so much of character mimicked

one from another, that, looking back at my past illustrations, I am surprised that there is not more of needless repetition. To the best of my ability, I have endeavoured to avoid this, and have, in more than one instance, excluded details which might have presented too close a resemblance to actions, to which attention has already been drawn, even at the risk of lessening the number of my pages, or presenting less forcibly a particular character to the reader. I find that there still remains to me eleven prisoners who are deserving a little notice at my hands.

Sarah Featherstone belongs more properly to the preceding chapter, being a life woman, and one more instance of civility and obedience in women who have by a hair's breadth escaped the hangman's hands. A poor girl, from a higher position of life than most of the prisoners with whom she is classed—a favourite with the whole prison—more, so to speak, the heroine of prison life than any to whom I have striven to direct attention.

She is the heroine of a dark story—a guilty heroine, such as writers of novels select at times,

and strive to throw a fictitious interest around—possibly a heroine more worthy of sympathy and pity than the offspring of many a morbid imagination.

Featherstone, at the time of my acquaintance with her, was serving a life sentence for the murder of her child; to the best of my belief, she is still an inmate of Brixton Prison.

The incidents connected with her crime aroused a general interest at the period of their occurrence, and much pity was felt for a young and well-educated woman placed in so awful a position. She was an example of the old story, to which we have alluded more than once, and which so often ends in a prison cell—woman's faith in the honour of her betrayer, to whom all honour is as dead as last year's leaves; the discovery; a sense of shame sending the trusting woman adrift on the world; madness, or a desperation akin to it, causing her to leave her child in a wood, or cast it into a pond—I am doubtful which—the death of the baby, and the arrest of the crime-driven young mother. A story not unlike Hetty's in

"Adam Bede," and from which, perhaps, Hetty's character was conceived—for novelists are quick at piecing the fragments of stern truth into a story that may touch all hearts.

Featherstone, I may repeat, then, was the heroine of prison life; a pretty young woman, whom the prisoners idolized for her gentleness, meekness, and submissiveness; a woman fully alive to a sense of her position, feeling it acutely, and striving by every means to make amends for it; a prisoner who never resisted discipline, and who obeyed all rules without a murmur. Every matron that Featherstone has had has been struck with her gentleness and lady-like manners. Every officer at one period or another, has felt how singularly out of place Featherstone seemed in prison, mixing with women so dead to any real contrition. As infirmary cleaner at Brixton Prison, she won much love to herself from all classes of women; she had the art of imparting comfort to the distressed, and of soothing the disputatious and quarrelsome. Many women preferred Featherstone's mediation to that of their favourite matrons;

they would do anything for her, if she only wished it, or made any effort to influence their minds.

Featherstone, so long as I had occasion to observe her, was a woman whose delicate health confined her often to an infirmary bed. I have a remembrance of her suffering twice from pleurisy, and of her taking all the ills that flesh is heir to with a gentleness and patience characteristic of her under every circumstance.

She was a constant reader of her Bible; on her sick bed or in her cell she seemed to derive much comfort from its perusal, and much resignation to her own hard fate. She was a regular communicant. I have no doubt she is still the same character that she was in my time —patient, uncomplaining, and reverent—deserving of every merciful consideration; and I am disposed to think that, when free pardons are bestowed on any of the women gathered together in these shadowy folds, Sarah Featherstone will not be entirely forgotten.

Mary McLean needs not such an extended description as the above; it is merely as an illus-

tration of professional prisoners that I allude to her at all. She is one of those women who like prisons, or who at least make that the excuse for their appearance in them. A thin starveling of a woman, of the quiet order, content to be locked up for a certain number of years, for the board and lodging gratuitously afforded her—a prisoner of the "Granny Collis" species, but younger and stronger. A professed needlewoman, who complains of work being too arduous and too ill-paid outside a prison for her to keep a home and live honestly thereby—and so committing a fresh theft and incurring a fresh conviction.

"It's not a mite of good my trying to live outside," she said once to me; "there's the worry to earn a crust, and the fight to get work at all, at any price. I have no friends, and I like this best. Where's the opposition *here?*"

Does not that "set-off" against prison expenditure, that shirt-making for City firms—and shame on the City firms who seek so cheap a market as our Government prisons!—work two ways, when the slaves of the needle succumb to

the force of so ruinous an opposition, and take to theft, or worse, as a means of life.

Butterworth, the third woman on my list, needs but a passing remark, as we hurry on to the completion of our task. There is a story connected with her, which I do not give as true, nor can I assert that it is false. It was whispered through the prison, and is worth repeating here, leaving the reader to exercise his own judgment in the matter. Butterworth was a feigned name, it was said; all information as to her friends and relations was refused on her apprehension, and kept an inviolable secret after her sentence. She gave birth to a child a few months after her transfer to Brixton, and never recovered the old strength prior to her confinement. In the sixth or seventh week of her half convalescence she fell suddenly and fatally ill again, refusing to the last any particulars concerning the child's relations.

"Send it to the workhouse," were her final injunctions, "it is better there."

"But you have friends?"

"Not now."

And the woman died with her secret, resisting all entreaties to the last. The child was sent to the workhouse, and the name of Butterworth was added to the medical officer's list of "deaths during the year."

Margaret Williams was an old prison character, and will very likely remain so to the last day of her life. I believe the latest intelligence is, that this lady has once more arrived at Millbank, to begin a new sentence for her last infringment of the laws; but such flying news must be received with reserve. What has not passed beneath my own experience, I allude to with some diffidence.

To repeat all Margaret Williams's escapades would be to describe again the exploits of Ball, Copes, Towers, and others. A little woman, with a deceptive appearance as to strength when first I had the misfortune to become acquainted with her, and possessed of a muscular power above the average of her sex. Constant punishment has tried her of late years, and reduced her to a skeleton; in earlier days she

seemed to wear out the strength of others and preserve her own.

Her principal feat was a sudden attack in Brixton Chapel on a matron who had reported her a few days previously. A fierce attack in the middle of service, and so unlooked for and unprepared against, as to place the matron's life in danger, and wake up almost a mutiny in chapel. The service was stopped, forms were knocked over; women stood up and screamed with excitement; those in the gallery, where the attack took place, rushed one against the other, and added to the general confusion; the clergyman in his pulpit stood spell-bound for an instant, and then strove ineffectually to quiet the raging sea of womankind below. It is singular that the woman Ball was again the means of rescuing the matron from her perilous position—as dangerous a prisoner as Ball was, she seemed ever ready to spring forward in the defence of a matron whom, under a similar grievance, she might have assaulted in a similar manner. There was no further morning service, it may be remarked, that day;

Margaret Williams was carried to "the dark," and the injured matron to her room. Ball, I believe, was afterwards rewarded for her valuable assistance by a year being deducted from her length of service.

Jane White, the fifth on my list, may also be classed amongst women who have sought extra notoriety by desperate acts in chapel. A prisoner of later date than her predecessor, she was almost as troublesome. Her chief eccentricity was to spring suddenly up in her seat in the chapel-gallery at Millbank, leap over the partition, and proceed, with an amazing *sang-froid*, to lower herself, or rather drop herself, amongst her compeers below, amidst their shrieks of consternation.

She succeeded in injuring her wrist by her fall, but not sufficiently—I believe I am right in asserting—to gain admittance to the infirmary, which, it was thought, was the sole aim and object of her freaks.

Benton's name I have thought well to enter here, not for any particular trait in her char-

acter—save that she was of the class that gives little trouble—but for the fact that she stands in the register as No. 1 at Brixton Prison, and was really the first woman who entered that establishment when it was opened for the reception of female convicts. She served her time out, and made her second appearance in 1859, or 1860, under the name of Macpherson—having adopted the name of a favourite matron, by way of compliment for past attention!

I need not linger at any length over the character of Susy Dunn—a coarse, troublesome giantess of a woman, with a certain keen sense of the ridiculous, that led her to commit many actions of a nature which I need not particularize too closely. One of her principal amusements, I may say, however, was seeking every opportunity to extinguish lights; putting the gas out in her cell, by covering it with her "pint," and then arousing a whole ward by exclamations concerning an escape of gas. If she could cover a matron's candle with her "pint," at any time, or by any manœuvre, she would chuckle

half the night at the result, despite the probability of a report arriving with the morning. Susy Dunn was partial to "breakings out," and tearing her dress to pieces; and was a frequent inmate of dark cells and "refractories."

Honor Matthews disputed the palm with Towers, as to being the most wicked, the most evilly possessed of female prisoners. A more violent, blasphemous, vindictive and dangerous woman never disgraced her sex. I have mentioned her act of destroying a matron's favourite cat by suffocation in "the dark"; actions that would give pain to others were Honor Matthews's chief satisfaction. She passed from prison without a hope that one good thought had been born within her during a long period of incarceration. Upon reflection, I am inclined to consider that if a jury of prison matrons were empanelled to consider the relative wickedness of Honor Matthews and Towers, the verdict would place the former at the head of the list of black sheep.

Amelia Mott may be passed over with a few words. A dwarf, and a prisoner of the vexatious kind; partial to company, and, when debarred from it at Millbank, or in the old prison at Brixton, inclined to signalize her discontent by beating against walls, and screaming salutations to the next prisoner at the top of her voice. She had a peculiar screeching laugh, that sounded at odd seasons, and curdled one's blood. She would occasionally induce the inmate of the next cell to relate some story, or some incident of her early career, not too virtuous or refined; and Amelia Mott, after long struggling with her hilarious propensities, would burst forth at the top of her voice, and unsettle a whole ward. Many tricks of prisoners, whose names have been mentioned already, might be set down in her own list of exploits, for she was an admirable mimic.

Mary Ann Smith takes also her place in the list of troublesome female convicts. Not so particularly troublesome in the matter of breakings out—though she liked a fair share in any popular disturbance—as in her desire to

be considered the prison jester, and to raise the laughter of the women on unseemly occasions.

Church was her general field for these exploits; and there her extraordinary antics, vacant expression of countenance, or odd grimaces, were generally too much for the gravity of the women. One might as well have expected reverence from the prison cats, as look for any particle of devotion in that girl's disposition. There was a cool impudence in some of her questions, which rendered even the matron doubtful whether ignorance or impertinence were her motive for putting them.

"Miss ——," she said, one afternoon, to her matron, "I think my voice is improving."

"That's good news, Smith."

"Just you listen, miss, when we sing in chapel the *can of taters and dominoes*"—meaning, it may be remarked, the *Cantate Dômino* of our evening service.

During the reading of the communion service one morning, it was remarked that every prisoner within hearing range of her voice was convulsed with suppressed laughter, she alone maintaining

a devout expression of countenance—if a long-drawn visage and upturned eyes can be considered devout at any time.

The women knelt and hid their faces, and heaved their shoulders convulsively, at every response of Smith's, until it became necessary for the matron to leave her seat, and approach her more closely, to discover the reason for this unseemly hilarity.

The secret was soon learned; Mary Ann Smith was responding to every sentence, "*Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep jackdaws,*" with a coolness and insolence that continued even after the discovery. Punishment for offences of this nature did not work much good—Mary Ann Smith remained incorrigible to the last.

Her flow of unseemly language, on special occasions, possessed a richness of blasphemy and obscenity unattained by any other prisoner. Before a director, even, she assumed the same free and easy insolence; on one occasion giving vent to a tirade of true Billingsgate abuse, such as no director, I believe, had heard before.

And perhaps it is as well that the heads of our convict establishments should have a little experience of the very dark side of character which makes some effort at demureness in their presence. Striking, or attempting to strike her matron, was a favourite freak of Mary Ann Smith's; her idiosyncrasies found a channel for display in every imaginable direction. Still there *were* times in which she was taken with "a good fit," and in those few and far between periods no one won more golden opinions to herself.

Summing up her faults and failings with her better qualities, it may be said that, when she was good, she was of the very best class of women; but when she was bad, decidedly of the very worst.

Emily Lawrence, a prisoner of a later date, was concerned in a diamond robbery, which made some little stir at the period of its occurrence. It may be remembered that Emily Lawrence was tried, with her companion Pearce, in April, 1860. Both Pearce and herself had been concerned in several great rob-

beries of jewellery, both in England and Paris. Pearce, who had been a skilful lapidary, and was considered an excellent judge of diamonds, was accustomed to accompany Lawrence, as her brother or husband, as occasion might demand, to the principal jewellers; there, by their specious manners and address, they would contrive to deceive the assistants, and abstract, almost before their eyes, valuable sprays and tiaras of brilliants. From M. Fontane, jeweller of Paris, Pearce, Lawrence and a third confederate, who was afterwards arrested, contrived to make off with nearly twelve thousand pounds' worth of jewellery; from Mr. Emanuel's, of Hanover Square, a diamond locket, value two thousand pounds, was extracted; whilst four diamond bracelets, value six hundred pounds each, were stolen from the well-known firm of Hunt and Roskell. How these valuable articles of jewellery were disposed of, has been always somewhat of a mystery; the general idea appears to be that Lawrence and Pearce were members of a secret and well-organized confederacy, which had—and has

—its agents in every large Continental city. Pearce and Lawrence were finally apprehended, and the latter was recognized by the police, as a woman who had been previously convicted for a clever act of shoplifting. Both prisoners were found guilty: Pearce was sentenced to ten years, and Lawrence to four years penal servitude. Of Lawrence's prison-life it now becomes my place to speak.

At Millbank Prison she fell into the usual groove — became a quiet, well-disciplined prisoner, rather fine in her manner and address, and inclined to disparage her fellow-prisoners. Rumour asserts that she was not long in prison before she used her best endeavours—or rather worst — to tamper with her officer's fidelity, promising the present of a valuable diamond for the transmission of a letter to Pearce, a prisoner in the male pentagon of Millbank Prison. Suspicions that there were diamonds still in her possession, led to a sudden *raid* on Lawrence's habiliments, and the furniture of her cell; and, sewn up in her stays, and even within her bed, were found two or three of the glittering

brilliants, for the robbery of which she was undergoing the sentence of the law.

She was as much discomfited, it is said, at the discovery of her little hoard—the store which was to help to set her up in the world again in the days of her liberty—as I have no doubt the original owners, to whom the diamonds were restored, were gladdened by so unlooked for a return of their valuable property.*

A dangerous woman, full of design, was Emily

* The reader will perceive that I mention this anecdote as simply a rumour that has reached my ears. Still I have been at some pains to elicit the truth of the case, before allowing it to appear in these pages, and I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Messrs. Hunt and Roskell, Mr. Harry Emanuel, and Inspector Whicher, of the Metropolitan Police Detective Department, for their kind and courteous communications on the subject. Still there is a very curious discrepancy in their statements, which appears to me to leave the matter in some doubt. Inspector Whicher remarks that no diamonds were discovered on Emily Lawrence, during her stay at Millbank; but that a diamond stud was found on James Pearce some months after conviction; whilst Mr. Emanuel informs me that my statement is quite correct, that diamonds were found upon her during her imprisonment, but that the small size of them prevented their identification as a portion of his missing property.

Lawrence. Of insinuating manners, and ever suggesting something to her officer which was against the rules. At Brixton Prison, whither she was transferred, she continued the part of tempter, and, by her specious address and tempting promises of jewels, endeavoured to impose upon more than one inexperienced officer.

There is a cautiousness and a slyness in all Lawrence's actions to this day, which make it very probable that a diamond or two may be in her possession yet. It was my own belief to the last day of my knowledge of her; I am not alone in it even now.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRISON DISCIPLINE—SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT THEREIN—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

It is the great question of the day, "What is the best discipline for male and female convicts?" Has the English system failed, although introduced with caution, followed up with diligence and closely watched in its results—or is the Irish system far ahead of it? I think Sir Joshua Jebb is right when he hints, in his Memorandum for 1860, that the comparison is an unfair one—that the management of a handful of convicts will admit of many variations, which, with a larger num-

ber, would be found entirely impracticable. I believe honestly that the experiment of the Irish system in England would end in entire failure if followed out *in toto*, although there are some few points of management in the former which deserve a trial here.

I have no intention of entering the field of argument for and against a hundred different systems; I have to the best of my ability detailed my own prison experience—spoken out where I considered it necessary, without regard for the outraged feelings of superiors, or "the divinity that doth hedge a" director of Government prisons. In again briefly mentioning, by way of summary, some of the views I entertain, I shall have fulfilled part of the object with which this concluding chapter is written.

In the first place, though it is not a question of discipline, I would again raise my feeble protest against employing prisoners to work for City firms. It is a premium on crime; it indicates to many needlewomen, with no work on hand, where board and lodging and needlework can be obtained; it is the source of deadly competition with the ho-

nest; it is an unnatural expedient to reduce prison expenditure, that in moral and enlightened England, with a thoughtful, feeling Lady on its throne, should be cried down by every honest soul with power to raise a voice against its glaring inconsistency.

This for the interest of society, and now for discipline.

It is suggested in Sir Joshua Jebb's Memorandum, to which I have recently alluded, that, to secure fully all the advantages to be derived from the existing organization in our prisons, increased means of superintendence are requisite. He thinks that extra prison directors would be the best means to arrive at a result so desirable. Sir Joshua may be right, but a late prison matron ventures to consider him egregiously in the wrong, if he consider the discipline of prisons wholly to depend upon a few more gentlemen, with large salaries, upon the Board of Direction. Prison discipline rests in the careful selection of the prison-staff: the warders, &c., of the male prisons —the matrons of the female.

I reiterate in this place, and it is a fact which I

hope will secure the attention of all thoughtful men with power to speak for us in Parliament, or in newspapers and magazines, *that the staff of matrons is not sufficient for the proper working of our female prisons;* that it has never been sufficient, and that the officers are worked too hard. Female prisoners must be treated *individually;* and when more attention can be paid to each woman, instead of to each class, results more satisfactory will be arrived at. Fourteen hours a day for a prison matron—fourteen hours of mental excitement—are too many. It is acknowledged by the Direction that the superintendence of female convicts forms the most trying feature of prison experience; cannot the directors imagine the up-hill struggles of those officers who are anxious to do their duty faithfully to those prisoners with whom they are brought in contact? Much that cannot be reported for very shame's sake, and much that a superintendent or a director objects to have reported for the credit of the prisoners in general, occur day after day. Battling ever with an opposition untiring and incessant, will, in time, surely undermine the strength of half

the officers. Ten years' service commands a pension—will the directors tell us what is the per-centage of prison-matrons who have ever earned one?

In addition to increasing the staff, let me urge here the importance of more care in its selection. Of late years the peculiar fitness of the applicant for the office has not been considered of so much moment as the influence or position of the person who recommends the applicant. Favoritism in this respect is a wrong to the State, and a satire on all attempts at prison discipline. Lady friends of directors and superintendents will be ever prone to offer the services of their ladies' maids and upper servants; and though these may not pass the probationary stage, yet their constant introduction—the constant appearance of fresh faces—is a hindrance to the proper working of a complex machinery. Raise again the standard of qualification for prison matrons; let them be thoughtful, earnest, religious women, with as fair an amount of education to assist them as is to be expected from those seeking such shadowy byways of life for a profession!

And as "*the whole principle of discipline is to lead, and not to drive—to place a man's (or woman's) fate and condition mainly in his (or her) hands, and encourage and reward all efforts to do well*"—so the discretion and judgment of the *leaders* should be ever of paramount importance.

If the proper management of the prison could also be conducted with a less amount of routine —if there were more often little breaks to relieve the monotony, as there are little breaks of sunshine in the sky's darkness during days of stormy weather—the advantages, I think, would be immediately perceived. Lectures, on divers subjects calculated to interest and distract a prisoner's mind, are delivered in our Irish prisons; would it not be a great boon to our English female convicts if the same practice were commenced in our prisons?

Another defect in discipline appears capable of being corrected. A greater care in the selection of women for association would be an improvement—better for the working of the prison, and for the morals of the prisoners. The matrons are sufficient judges of character to tell who are the

best suited for each other's society, whose example might be imitated with advantage, and whose influence would check a break-out or a fit of sullenness that may portend the more sad break-out which ends in Fisherton and Bethlehem. Little, if any, care is exercised as to the characters of the women in association, and much harm is done in consequence.

I have been forestalled in one suggestion I intended to make here—the removal of the worst class of prisoners to a separate establishment; the withdrawal altogether, so far as possible, of the evil example which spreads like a deadly blight from ward to ward. The prison at Broadmoor, I understand, is designed for the reception of the future Towers, Balls, and Copes's! Much ultimate good, I feel convinced, will be the result of such a step. Where there are women wholly vile, whom nothing can affect—whom no religious teaching can soften—they are best apart from those whose weak minds are liable to be impressed by bad example.

I would suggest, also, a lunatic ward to every prison, or at least the separation of those women

whose eccentricities are dangerous, and the condition of whose minds it is yet difficult to determine. When placed in association, it should be with careful prisoners; but they should be kept *apart*, both for the sake of the prisoners and their custodians.

As Broadmoor will be the destination of the worst class of prisoners separated from the general body, so Fulham, without regard to age or antecedents, should be the fold in which to gather together the most exemplary of female convicts. And if, by means of a government grant, the good effects of the Prisoners' Aid Society could be rendered still more comprehensive, and its sphere of usefulness more extended, the number of "returns" and "reconvictions," I am sure, would continue to diminish. The Prisoners' Aid Society is the Prison-Government's Aid Society also, and should be the fourth estate for *all* prisoners who hope to lead better lives.

In conclusion, let me remind the reader that my object in laying these chronicles before him has been simply to show him, by means of the opportunities afforded me as a prison matron, a little

of the life and character excluded from the world; I have attempted to throw no fictitious element over scenes that might have been enhanced by such means, feeling convinced that there were sufficient incidents to interest a reader, and that, if they failed to do so, the fault would be in my mode of telling them rather than in the incidents themselves. I have done my best.

An old writer once said—

> "All this world's a prison,
> Heaven the high wall about it, sin the jalour."

And in some senses it may be said that all the world is in a prison. All the world's elements, good and bad; the teachers of right, and the scoffers at it; the honest and hard-working; those in whom pride goeth before a fall; the rich, the poor, the jealous, the vain, the evil-speaking, the lying and slandering, all as common to this dark sphere within as to the world without. In this little world is more of life's discord than harmony—too many wrecks cast ashore from the surging waters that are never still—a world in its entirety, with all its troubles, ambitions and responsibilities.

To judge that world honestly and in all fairness, was the task I set myself some months ago. In all honesty and fairness I claim the right to be judged.

THE END.

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